

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



April 2015

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Conquering The Limited*

Let us be no more the worshippers of creeds or sects with small limited notions of God, but see Him in everything in the universe. If you are knowers of God, you will everywhere find the same worship as in your own heart. Get rid, in the first place, of all these limited ideas and see God in every person—working through all hands, walking through all feet, and eating through every mouth. In every being He lives, through all minds He thinks. He is self-evident, nearer unto us than ourselves. When we shall feel that oneness, we shall be immortal. We are physically immortal even, one with the universe, I live in that one. I am not this limited little being, I am the universal. I am the life of all the sons of the past. I am the soul of Buddha, of Jesus, of Mohammed. I am the soul of the teachers, and I am all the robbers that robbed, and all the murderers that were hanged, I am the universal. Stand up then; this is the highest worship. You are one with the universe. That only is humility—not crawling upon all fours and calling yourself a sinner. That is the highest evolution when this veil of differentiation is torn off. The highest creed is Oneness. I am so-and-so is a limited idea, not true of the real 'I'. I am the universal; stand upon that and ever worship the Highest through the highest form, for God is Spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Through lower forms of worship, man's material thoughts rise to spiritual worship



and the Universal Infinite One is at last worshipped in and through the spirit. That which is limited is material. The Spirit alone is infinite. God is Spirit, is infinite; man is Spirit and, therefore, infinite, and the Infinite alone can worship the Infinite. The grandeur of realising these ideas, how difficult it is! I theorise, talk, philosophise; and the next moment something comes against me, and I unconsciously become angry, I forget there is anything in the universe but this little limited self, I forget to say, 'I am the Spirit, what is this trifle to me? I am the Spirit.' I forget it is all myself playing, I forget God, I forget freedom. One moment I say, 'Thy will be done,' and the next moment something comes to try me and I spring up in a rage. The attempt to kill the false 'I', so that the real 'I', the Lord will reign. 'Thy will be done'—every moment the traitor mind rebels against it, yet it must be said, again and again, if we are to conquer the lower self.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2013), 1.350–53.

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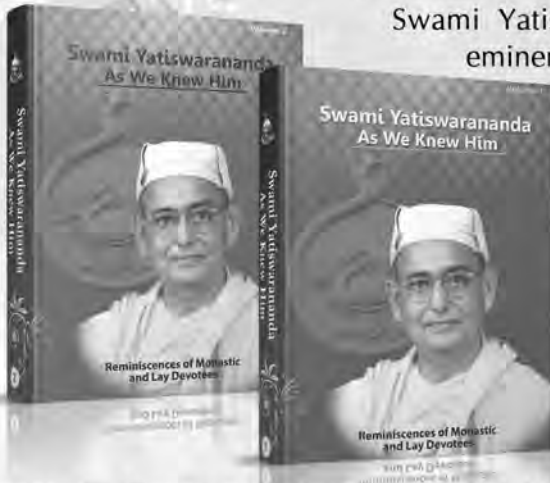
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Maitrayaniya Upanishad

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मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथ भगवान् शाकायन्यः सुप्रीतोऽब्रवीद् राजानम् । महाराज बृहद्रथेक्ष्वाकु-वंश-ध्वज शीघ्रमात्मज्ञः
कृतकृत्यस्त्वं मरुन्नामेति विश्रुतोऽसीति । अयं वाव खल्व्वात्मा ते । कतमो भगवा इति । तं होवाचेति

॥ २.१ ॥

*Atha bhagavan shakayanyah suprito'abraid rajanam. Maharaja brihad-rathekshvaku-
vansha-dhvaja shighramatmajnah krita-kriyastvam marun-namneti vishruto'siti. Ayam vava
khalvatma te. Katamo bhagava iti. Tam hovacheti.* (2.1)

Then, revered Shakayanya, who was very pleased, said to the king: 'O great king Brihadra-
tha, the carrier of the banner of the lineage of Ikshvaku, you, who is famous as Marut, will
fulfil your goals and will soon realise the Self. This indeed is your Self.' 'Which, O revered
sir', asked the king. Then he said to the king. (2.1)

अथ य एष उच्छ्वासाविष्टम्भनेनोर्ध्वम् उत्क्रान्तो व्ययमानोऽव्ययमानस्तमः प्रणुदत्येष आत्मेत्याह
भगवान् मैत्रिः । इत्येवं ह्याह । अथ य एष सम्प्रसादोऽस्माच्छरीरात्समुत्थाय परं ज्योतिरुपसम्पद्य स्वेन
रूपेणाभिनिष्पद्यत एष आत्मेति होवाचैतदमृतमभयमेतद्ब्रह्मेति ॥ २.२ ॥

*Atha ya esha uchchhvas-avishtambhanen-ordhvam utkranto vyayamano'vyayamanas-
tamah pranudatyasha atmetyaha bhagavan maitrih. Ityevam hyaha. Atha ya esha
samprasado'smaccharirat-samutthaya param jyotirupasampadya svena rupenabhinishpadyata
esha atmeti hovach-aitad-amritam-abhayam-etad-brahmeti.* (2.2)

Now, It which, without stopping the respiration, goes upwards and who, moving about, yet
unmoving, dispels darkness—That is the Atman. Thus said the honourable Maitri. For thus
has it been said: 'Then this one who is fully serene, rising up from this body and reaching the
highest light, remains established in his true nature. This is the Atman. Thus said he. This is
immortal. This is beyond all fear. This is Brahman.' [*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 8.3.4]. (2.2)

THIS MONTH

CIVILITY IS OFTEN CONSIDERED to be a limit on liberty. Is it true? The present-day society has become too permissive. Why is it important to be civil while exercising our freedom? What harm does unrestricted freedom bring to society? These are the issues pondered upon in **Liberty vs Civility**.

Ganesha has been always considered to be the Hindu god of auspicious beginnings. There are numerous explanations for the unique form of this deity with an elephant head. Alok Dutta, a litterateur, artist, and social activist from Kolkata, gives us a novel interpretation of the form of **Ganesha**.

The Ramayana contains insights useful for administration. In **Administrative Wisdom in the Ramayana**, we are given a detailed description of the various nuggets of administrative wisdom contained in the Ramayana by Dr Pramod Pathak, professor of Management Studies at the Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, and a researcher, trainer, consultant, literary critique, columnist, and commentator. The author acknowledges the contribution of Preshita Neha Tudu, SRF, Department of Management Studies, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad in preparing the article.

Faith can make possible the impossible. It is the bedrock of all religious and spiritual life. **The Power of Faith** is elaborately explained by Swami Pavitranaanda, former Minister-in-charge, Vedanta Society of New York. This is an edited transcript of a talk delivered in 1955.

The initial encounters of Vedanta and Freemasonry are talked of in the second instalment

of **Masonic Vedanta** by Guy L Beck, a scholar, author, musician, educator, historian of religions, musicologist, a Fulbright-Nehru senior research fellow and visiting fellow at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford University, UK, lecturer in Religious Studies and Asian Studies at Tulane University; and adjunct professor of Religious Studies at Loyola University, New Orleans.

China has a rich cultural heritage. Many religions have grown in this nation. The history and spread of these religious movements are topics of great interest. Swami Durgananda, registrar, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, talks about the cultural life of China in **A Monk's Journeys in China**. The concluding part of this two-part article focuses on the cultural, philosophical, and religious horizons of China and brings to us a pilgrim's perspective of many of its places of worship.

In the fifth instalment of **Memory**, Swami Satyamayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, explores the different attributes of memory.

The Rani of Jhansi, Lakshmi Bai, has a great place in the heart of almost every Indian. She represents the power of Indian women. A rare example of an Indian woman ruler, she gave up her life while fighting for her people. We get a critical analysis of her life in **The Rani of Jhansi** by Harleen Singh, associate professor of Literature, South Asian Studies, and Women's Studies at Brandeis University, Massachusetts. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Liberty vs Civility

ALL OF US ARE FREE. Or want to be. Our entire lives are spent in struggling to express ourselves despite the external pressures trying to muffle us. The history of humanity is the history of the struggle for freedom at all levels—physical, intellectual, emotional, political, social, and religious—anything that the human mind could conceive of. We want to be free to live, dress, and express ourselves through speech, signs, or creative arts, as we want. The hallmark of civilisation is individual liberty. We want to keep it that way.

The question is: Is there no limit to this liberty? Will liberty remain if we impose limits on it? Can liberty be a licence to injure others physically, emotionally, or intellectually? More important, if liberty be without any reins, what is the utility of legal systems? Would they not become redundant? What would then be the meaning of civilised behaviour if anyone could do anything one pleased without any thought for others? These are pivotal questions, answers to which would help draw the thin line between liberty and civility. These questions have various dimensions and applications in almost all spheres of our lives, both private and public.

Here we focus on the personal dimension of these questions. In a free society, everyone is supposed to have a personal space, close to the body and mind, where one can act according to one's wish. How we dress, present ourselves, what we read, think, express, create, what or whom we love, our ambitions, life-goals—all these and more comprise this personal space.

But how personal is our personal space? Can one's personal space or personal preferences cause injury to others or encroach upon others' personal spaces? Everyone should be allowed to walk freely in a free society. Then why do we have 'No Admission' signs? Why can't someone walk into another's private quarters uninvited? Why can't someone enter into the sanctum sanctorum of a place of worship, which is supposed to be sacred and not trespassed by all? Do these practices amount to restriction of the private spaces

Public display of affection is a mockery of both affection and the public. Things which are dear to one's heart are better kept in the heart, sharing only with the loved ones.

of people? Military establishments are out of bounds to civilians. The laity cannot enter into monastic quarters. The clubs and associations of the privileged or affluent are not open to commoners. Does this mean the curbing of personal freedom? The answer is no. We should take a closer look at the concept of personal freedom.

Personal freedom regarding basic food, shelter, clothing, thought, and expression is generally accepted as the right of an individual. But to get more than that, one has to earn or deserve it. To get into a military establishment you have to be a soldier and to enter into a monastery you have to be a monastic. You need to earn a lot of money to enter into the company of the privileged. So, personal freedom is not always unqualified or unconditional.

Now, we come to the pertinent question of expression of individual choices, some of which are too personal to be made public. The choice of clothing is a case in point. A minimum amount of clothing and with at least some decorum is necessary to avoid offending others' feelings. The whole concept of 'table manners' arises out of this necessity to maintain a minimum code of conduct while eating so as to not hurt others. These are the fine details of human etiquette and also civilised behaviour. Similarly, choices related to the private space of an individual need not be made public, much less exercised in the open. While no free society would curb an individual's choice regarding marriage or courtship, doing in public, things which are best done indoors, though by consenting adults, would only create a society where there would be no meaning of the words 'civility' and 'obscenity'. Even those championing the display of such acts in public, do not approve of these things being done in front of children. Public display of affection makes a mockery of both affection and the public. Things which are dear to one's heart are better kept there, in the heart, and given access only to the people who are involved.

This is not a question of only a particular culture or religion but it concerns the very concept of culture. We always need to maintain a balance between liberty and civility. A person has no right to disfigure another's face simply because she or he does not like it. Permissiveness is one of the causes of the increasing stress on liberty even to the extent of becoming uncivil. Permissiveness has never caused growth. No horse without reins has ever won any race. Unbridled energy leads only to chaos. It is directed energy that produces results. The availability of too many choices and the freedom to protest have made the present-day society fight for anything and everything, without any thought of the greater good.

If anything and everything became permissible, there would be no evolution in language, literature, the creative arts, relationships, religion, philosophy, science, or any other such discipline that has made humanity distinct. There would be no effective difference between human beings and animals. Animals eat, defecate, and copulate in the open. If human beings decide to do the same, what distinction would remain? The history of humankind of the last century is witness to the increasing crassness in almost all forms of human expression. Earlier human communication was slow and had finesse. Today it is fast and gross.

The popular media has fed on this tendency to bring into open things that are best kept private. There has been an alarming rise in television and other media programmes that telecast and provoke to reveal the secrets of personal relationships and have caused many broken families. This has created a bad tendency among the audience to expect such things in the future leading to more and more of such media content and consequent disrupted relationships.

The saddest part of this trespassing of liberty on civility is that people have become more aggressive to protect their individual, cultural, social, and national identities. This happens because they feel threatened when someone imposes individual or cultural preferences on all others in the name of freedom. The result is increased polarisation and segregation. The only way out is to have the same level of freedom for all, the aggressive and the docile alike. It is only a common ground of civility that ensures that the aggressive does not take more than the docile. Let us become civil. Let us be free but also remember that with freedom comes responsibility. Let us cherish all that is personal and keep the confidences of our loved ones a secret with us. Let us not wash our dirty linen in public. Let us be human beings.



Ganesha

Alok Dutta

I WILL TALK ABOUT GANESHA. But before that, a little about Buddha. From *bodha*, enlightenment, has come Buddha. Art is also enlightenment. Art encompasses aesthetics, taste, and the sense of limits, and many other such sensibilities that many are aware of. The knowledge of symbols is also an integral and especially useful part of art. One day, pointing to the large eyes of a marble statue of Gautama Buddha, a venerated senior artist, Samir Ghosh, asked some of us students of art: 'Do you see? He is Nepali by birth, but why does he have such large eyes?' He replied himself: 'This has come out of the understanding of the artist. Buddha was a knower. His knowledge gave a different dimension to whatever he perceived. So, he could see much more than what an ordinary person could. Maybe Buddha had large eyes, maybe he did not. But the understanding of the artist demanded that large eyes be the symbol of his farsightedness. For the same reason, Buddha's ears are also large. Whatever an ordinary person could understand by hearing, Buddha could understand much more. And so, he could hear much more. The artist gave the message through the artistic symbol created from one's own understanding: Buddha is higher

than the ordinary person; that is why he sees more and hears more. One who could understand the symbol could read the message of the artist.'

Now, let us talk about Ganesha. *Gana* means humanity. *Isha* means lord. *Gana + Isha* does not mean the lord of humanity. It means one who is *Gana* is *Isha*. Humanity is itself God and he is also Ganesha. Humanity means the

unity of the many. That is why his

body is huge and bulky. His hands and mouth are big, his stomach huge, and he needs a lot of food. People living on one side of this huge earth cannot see the happenings of the other side. But, the news of such happenings travels great distances through numerous ears. That is why Ganesha's ears are much larger than his eyes. The nose can sense smells from long distances. That is why Ganesha's nose, the trunk, is long. The form

of Ganesha is the combination of various symbols of human society. What is

the harm, if his head becomes big like that of an elephant, in order to preserve all these symbols? The elephant is a very intelligent, strong, sensible, empathetic, and a social animal. The elephant had a remarkable role and contribution in the past when great works were done in society through a synthesis of intelligence and strength.




Just like society is a collective, the symbol of society is also a collective of symbols. Society consists of men and women. Both have an active role in the evolution of human civilisation. That is why Ganesha has four hands, two of man and two of woman. By one hand he blows the conch shell of civilisation, by another hand he holds the disc, a symbol of constant movement and change. In another hand, the mace gives us an inkling of the intensity of the strike of collective anger. The other hand holds the symbol of the development of society—a hundred-petalled lotus full in its form, colour, and fragrance.

Society does not see this world only through the physical eyes, but also through the heart, through inner vision. The symbol of this inner vision or the vision of intellect is the third eye. That is why Ganesha has this third eye between his eyebrows. The expression of the heart lies in empathy and cooperation. To share others' sorrows and pains and to be happy in others' happiness is the sense of socialisation. It is because the human being has this sense of socialisation that it could appreciate the need for society and could form societies. This sense has inspired human beings to protect their lineage in this ephemeral world, and thereby protect their existence and increase their power.

The need for increasing offspring was greater when the human population was less in comparison with the extent of earth. Among the species closer to the human beings, mice have a higher growth rate. They also have a strong sense of smell, probably stronger than that of dogs. That is why they can smell food even from long distances. Society requires a lot of food for many people. Having such diverse qualities and special abilities, only a mouse could be the vehicle of Ganesha. Besides, as a symbol of the co-existence of the mighty and the weak in society, the presence of a mouse besides Ganesha looks appropriate. Ritualistic people have

given brand equity to these symbols. Else, Ganesha would have also been appropriate as the symbol of any republic or socialist political party.

All efforts and creation of the hardworking bear fruit only if people accept the efforts. All effort and endeavour of the individual becomes fruitful only with the help and cooperation of the collective. Thus human society alone is the giver of boons. Being a part of society itself removes all obstacles. That is why *Gana-Isha*, is the remover of obstacles. And that is why, before starting anything, human society, *Gana-Isha*, has to be remembered, worshipped, pleased, and involved. Worship is not just accepting the great as great, accepting the best as best, and adoring or bowing down to them, but it also means surrendering to them and taking discipleship. This tradition has been preserved for a long time by Indian traders. On the New Year day according to Indian calendars, they perform ritual worship of Ganesha, the symbol of *Gana-Isha*, and adore the living deity, the customer Ganesha. Then trade is no longer just an exchange of goods or services for money but the creation of relationships and belonging in society through the process of give and take.

Let this New Year begin with salutations to and worship of Ganesha because it is Indian culture to worship God in human beings. The monks of the Ramakrishna Order have not confined worship to flowers, bel leaves, and the blowing of conch shell. They serve those afflicted by drought, flood, epidemics, and other natural calamities, knowing them to be God. Serving God in man is the Indian tradition. Many Indian organisations, irrespective of their religious affiliations, are now active in helping the underprivileged. Many more are doing such noble work, we have lost count. I feel one with all worshippers of *Gana-Isha*. I feel proud when they work for the welfare of society. I am proud because I am an Indian. I want to be prouder. 

Administrative Wisdom in the Ramayana

Pramod Pathak

Prologue

THE SEARCH FOR A MODEL administrative paradigm is as ancient as civilisation. From Greek scholars like Plato and Aristotle to the French intellectual Voltaire—all have given their ideas on how a state should be run. While their ideas may provide the Occidental view of an ideal administrative system the Orient also has made significant contribution to the idea of governance. The Indian scriptures—particularly the mythological texts, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—are considered to be repositories of wisdom as far as governance and statecraft is concerned. Nevertheless, even after more than a decade into the twenty-first century we still do not have a clear idea as to what is the prescription for an ideal administration.

We all talk about good governance and look for options arising from ideology to technology to create a good government but are still struggling to find the model state. However, in popular language, this model state is often called *Ramarajya*, the state of Sri Ramachandra, in India. Why this is so may be open to interpretation but it is widely accepted that *Ramarajya* is the epitome of good governance even outside India. This perhaps was the reason why on 19 November 2012 speaking at a Diwali party hosted by him at his official residence, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron said that the 'Ramayana is a good lesson for good governance. In the epic Ramayana, we are looking for how we give people protection, affection and correction.'¹ If Cameron has a reason to refer to

the Ramayana, we certainly need to ponder over it and draw our own lessons.

What is good governance may not be easy to define, yet it must be admitted that it is more about governance and less about government. The most popular saying related to this is that

It is widely accepted that *Ramarajya*, the state of Sri Ramachandra, is an epitome of good governance even outside India.

quoted by Thoreau: 'That government is best which governs least.'² The present Indian Government also talks about the same philosophy: 'Minimum government, Maximum governance.'³ In management theory too, the recommended style is to avoid close supervision, that is, Theory Y. Eminent champions from Jefferson, Emerson to O'Sullivan have all proclaimed less government as good governance. But what is the essence of good governance? Nelle Harper Lee in her famous book, *To Kill A Mocking Bird*, quotes the Jeffersonian principle through one of its leading characters: 'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none.'⁴ But these notwithstanding, let us accept that it is not easy to attain good governance. Nevertheless, good governance is what the populace desires. It is the desideratum on which the fates of governments are tested. It is the benchmark for best practices.

The big question then is: Can there be a formula for good governance? This is not so easy to state but our highly revered mythological text Ramayana offers some definite clues on good governance. Given the fact that *Ramarajya*

is considered the epitome of good governance and Sri Ramachandra is considered the ideal administrator, it is worthwhile to recapitulate the golden words of wisdom from the Ramayana, the narrative written by sage Valmiki and later by Goswami Tulasidas as *Ramcharitmanas*, the two most popular texts on the life and times of Sri Ramachandra. There are many more versions of the Ramayana but the present article is confined to the Valmiki Ramayana. The era when Sri Ramachandra is said to have lived is referred to as *Treta Yuga*, which followed *Satya Yuga*, the first era.

Essentials of Good Governance

At the advent of *Satya Yuga* there were neither kings nor kingdoms as mentioned in the *Shanti Parva* of the Mahabharata in which Bhishma on his death bed is giving lessons on administrative acumen to Yudhishtira. Yet there was order in those stateless societies. Those were the times when societies were self-managed units working on principles of self-organised criticality of natural systems. The basic rule was righteous conduct based on dharma. Gradually, decline set in and self-sustained and self-governed societies where people lived according to the tenets of dharma, started falling apart. Anarchy started growing with greed and possessiveness becoming prevalent. This led to the emergence of unregulated, free-for-all societies. It was during this period that the gods went to Brahma, the creator, to bring the society out of the morass of valuelessness. It was then that Brahma wrote the book of knowledge, which laid down the laws of living, with dharma, artha, and kama as cardinal values. Because of these three subjects this book was also called *Trivarga*. Thus was laid the foundation of the modern state in the form of kingdoms to ensure order in societies that had started resorting to the law of the jungle.

Interestingly, stateless societies were also conceived in Occidental thought. The Marxist view also talks about the stateless society as its ultimate objective when it assumes that after the dictatorship of the proletariat the state shall wither away. Adam Smith's concept of *laissez-faire* also advocated no governance assuming that the societies will be self-organised. And the idea of anarchism, the political philosophy of Kropotkin also advocates stateless societies often defined as self-governed voluntary institutions. Thus, societies without government were supposed to be the ideal forms of government. But these did not work and remained a utopia as conceptualised by Sir Thomas More. Naturally, some form of an ideal state was the aspired objective as the law of the jungle could not be a proper model.

While many may feel that the law of the jungle still persists, of course, in different forms, *Ramarajya* is the ideal model that we crave for. What was the hallmark of *Ramarajya*? It was the epitome of ideal governance based on righteousness, equality, and prosperity for all with the touchstone being dharma, which was the basis of all decision making, and other important virtues of the king, leader, or the ruler were right conduct and concern for the good of the people.

Against this background there is a need to understand why Ravana, the mighty demon-king—with all his wealth and team of heavily-armed warriors and strategists—was humbled by Sri Ramachandra, the barefoot prince of Ayodhya, assisted only by an army of monkeys who had no armour or other protective gear. The Ramayana is, in itself, a great learning story that stresses that only integrity and honesty will work, the greatest strength of the king being his value-based conduct. This is why Sri Ramachandra is called *maryada purushottama*, the best among ethical men.

Ravana lost out primarily because of unrighteousness. His intentions were not noble. Despite his strengths of austerity, intellect, and devotion, he failed. His unrighteousness proved to be his undoing. The second reason was his ego, his haughtiness that clouded his judgement. He was autocratic and ignored sage counsel. His decisions were driven by negative emotions—lust, greed, envy, and pride rather than pure reason.

Sri Ramachandra, on the other hand, was motivated by the right cause. He was humble and listened to his people. He respected their views and sought their advice on sensitive issues. The trust he reposed in his people paid dividends. He was everything that

Ravana was not—honest, righteous, respectful, warm, and loving. Sri Ramachandra's rule was based on the tenets of *Trivarga*, that is dharma, artha, and kama, and this was why *Ramarajya* was considered the ideally administered government.

This view is also endorsed by Vedanta that recognises the concept of *Trivarga*, the triad, which always has to go together to ensure the happiness of all. The objectives of dharma, artha, and kama are to lead the society to material progress, cultural development, and general welfare of its diverse population.

The Ramayana: The Repository of Administrative Wisdom

The Ramayana, the saga of Sri Ramachandra's life written by Valmiki, is widely acclaimed as among the greatest of all Indian epics. The narrative is regarded as a veritable treatise on social sciences, offering lessons that transcend both time and space. This famous text carries useful



Bharata comes to meet Sri Ramachandra at Chitrakuta

tips on ethics, values, statecraft, and politics, and even general, strategic, and human resource management.

The Ramayana can serve as a useful reference book on lessons of governance for those willing to learn. With *Ramarajya* as a model of good governance, the Ramayana is a must read for practitioners of statecraft. More so because of the present need to arrest corruption and check falling standards in governance. The lessons have been referred to solely from the Valmiki Ramayana because that is supposed to be the original narrative based on Valmiki's account of

the life and times of Sri Ramachandra. Though *Ramacharitmanas* is no less authentic, it is more of a narrative based on the devotion of Goswami Tulasidas. Keeping in view the seminal importance of the Valmiki Ramayana conclusions have been drawn in this article from only this text. While every section of this text carries several important lessons on the art and craft of administration some selected sections have been identified keeping in view their relevance for the present times in the context of governance.

In the Valmiki Ramayana, the Ayodhya Kanda, which is the second chapter, contains comprehensive lessons on good governance. When Bharata, the younger brother of Sri Ramachandra, meets the latter in the forest to request him to return to Ayodhya and take charge of the kingdom, the two brothers enter into a long and instructive dialogue culminating in some very crucial lessons for statecraft covering a wide array of subjects. Bharata has gone to meet Rama who was in exile following his father King Dasharatha's command.

After asking about the well-being of Bharata, Sri Ramachandra gives some effective tips to his brother on how to govern by asking certain questions in the form of do's and don'ts. Thus follows a comprehensive discourse by Sri Ramachandra which covers issues related to governance rather minutely. From the quality of ministers and the importance of strategy sessions, to temperance in administration and justice, Sri Ramachandra expounds on all the subtleties of governance and statecraft in a lucid manner. Apparently, Sri Ramachandra seems to be inquiring whether all is well in Ayodhya. However, in the process, the lessons on effective governance are offered in a powerful manner. This encounter between the two brothers runs into several pages and a thorough reading is required to understand the intricacies, but

some important lessons are more pertinent and have been paraphrased below from the one hundredth chapter of the Ayodhya Kanda.

While emphasising that a critical factor in good governance is the quality of ministers Sri Ramachandra asks Bharata whether he has appointed the best persons for the job. That is, on the basis of merit and merit alone. And this merit according to Sri Ramachandra is courage, sagacity, knowledge, strong will, high emotional quotient, and a capacity to take objective decisions. Only people having these qualities should be appointed as ministers, because quality advice is the key to effective governance. The emphasis is on competence and confidentiality. Ministers should not only be persons of high calibre, they should also have strong character. They should be people who are capable of keeping things to themselves as long as it is required. People who are not able to maintain secrecy may prove dangerous. Sri Ramachandra's advice to Bharata is to take a decision on a complex issue neither unilaterally nor in consultation with too many people. There should be an efficient core group that should aid and advise the king. The focus in this selection is on putting the right person on the right job, no different than the objectives of modern day human resource management. Nepotism and other personal considerations such as likes and dislikes should not in any way affect selection. Coterie rule or sycophancy must be strictly discouraged. The distinction between right men and yes men is brought out rather succinctly.

Sri Ramachandra suggests Bharata to practise solitude and quietude for effective decision making because the king should have his own mind and for this he has to ponder silently in the wee hours. In ancient Indian philosophical literature this hour of the night is called *brahma muhurta*, the time just before the break of the dawn. It is this time when the mind is in its purest form.

Discipline and sleep are important for thinking clearly and this is what Sri Ramachandra suggests. He also tells Bharata to always keep his cards close to his heart so that the outsiders do not get to know about his plans before they are executed. Bharata is advised by Sri Ramachandra to prefer real wise men as advisors because even one such person can be of immense use to the king. One wise person can be much bigger an asset than ten thousand fools. Further, while allocating work the king should always make sure that it is done on the basis of competence rather than personal preferences. This is some kind of a competence mapping that is in vogue as the latest trend. Also, it is important to have honest people who are incorruptible. Liking this to management theory we find that this is somewhat similar to what modern literature advocates—intelligence quotient, emotional quotient, and morality quotient—as the three key attributes of effective managers.

This is the beauty of the Ramayana. It is so ancient yet so contemporary. Whatever is being told by Sri Ramachandra to his brother Bharata is quality advice on administration. The Lord also refers to the personal traits of a good administrator. He says that a king must be known for his fairness and objectivity. This however, should not mean lack of compassion. Fairness and cruelty are entirely different things and a king should be known to be fair but not cruel. Cruel kings are not respected by their people and fall prey to conspiracy or rebellion. This is quite close to the two key Japanese concepts of *Omoi-yari* and *Sunao mind*, the famous hallmarks of effective Japanese management. *Omoi-yari* can be regarded as a form of social intelligence. It is a conscious choice to examine other's perspectives without judgement. Differences are accepted and appreciated without labelling them 'right' or 'wrong'. This implies that one also has

to be aware of one's own perspective as only one possible way, and not as 'true' or 'false'. *Sunao mind* means having a broad open mind which is amenable to suggestions or new ideas. This is similar to the concept of 'I am Ok, You Are Ok' of Thomas Harris.

A good administrator needs to ensure high returns from minimum investments and this can only come from people of proven merit who can sustain prosperity during an economic crisis. Even if there is one minister who is really effective, the king will gain immensely. Appointing tested persons of noble lineage and integrity for strategic positions is the key to successful govern-

While emphasising that a critical factor in good governance is the quality of ministers Sri Ramachandra asks Bharata whether he has appointed the best persons for the job.

ment. Regarding revenue generation Sri Ramachandra suggests that moderate taxes should be levied on people, lest they revolt. He advises Bharata to treat his soldiers well and pay their legitimate wages on time. Delays in payment of wages and other allowances can lead to dangerous consequences. Anything could happen, from revolt to sabotage. Again, this is some effective human resource management in practice.

In this dialogue between the two brothers, issues ranging from appointments to duties, personnel management to financial management, defence to diplomacy, leader behaviour to leader-follower relationship—are all discussed in detail. Not only these, trade and agriculture, business, and ecology also find place in the discussions. Sri Ramachandra says that trade and agriculture are important and wants Bharata to ensure good irrigation facilities rather than being overly dependent on rains. With monsoons playing truant in present times, taking a leaf out of this

discourse may prove worthwhile. Traders need to be ensured of a fear-free environment and their grievances should be redressed promptly. Is it not similar to what is today fashionably called as the ease of doing business index? Sri Ramachandra advises Bharata to meet his citizens regularly, a practice that in today's political jargon is called *janata darbar*. In modern management theory this is similar to 'Management By Walking Around'.

Protecting the forests and maintaining livestock have also been dealt with as important aspects of effective governance. The stress on ecology and maintaining flora and fauna sounds so contemporary that it appears as if one is reading a modern text. In fact, the vision of the Ramayana has eternal relevance. Law and justice, finance and business, corruption, framing of innocents for monetary gains, injustice to the poor—are all lucidly mentioned. How the king should administer, how he should deliver justice and how he should treat his ministers, army, diplomats, elders, intellectuals, and employees have all been elaborately discussed in these sections of the Ramayana. In addition, it is also mentioned how the subjects, the commoners are to be managed. Interestingly there are some crucial tips on family management, particularly in relation to women. Sri Ramachandra says that Bharata should keep his women satisfied and make them feel protected. But he also cautions his brother against sharing state secrets with them.

Some very interesting insights are being offered by Sri Ramachandra, which point to what has gone wrong today. For instance he warns Bharata against corrupt officials who accept bribes to let thieves and robbers go scot free. He further cautions against the use of wealth while according justice in a dispute between rich and poor. No innocent must get punished because the tears due to the pain and

anguish that the innocent experiences has the power to destroy kingdoms. Modern day criminal jurisprudence also endorses this view which is stated in Blackstone's formulation: 'It is better that ten guilty persons escape, than that one innocent suffer.'

Sri Ramachandra tells Bharata to focus on both righteousness and wealth creation. Both are important but the congruence between them is critical. Wealth creation should not affect righteousness and righteousness should not be a hurdle in wealth creation. There has to be a balance. For the king, righteousness, wealth, and pleasure—all three are important. The king should strive to earn the loyalty of his citizens through his conduct and deeds.

Sri Ramachandra mentions the common mistakes that a king makes and asks Bharata to guard against these. They include atheism or non-belief, lying, anger, arrogance, procrastination, not having wise company, laziness, too much inclination for sensual pleasure, taking critical decisions on matters of state by oneself, seeking advice from the foolish, delay in planned action, not able to maintain secrecy, not indulging in auspicious work, and opening too many fronts at the same time. The thrust of Sri Ramachandra's discourse is on the duties of a king based on righteousness. In modern management terminology what this suggests is that the king must be a blend of the philosopher king and the benevolent autocrat—tough and soft, neutral and considerate, righteous and soft, planner and executor.


Sri Ramachandra's words of advice to Bharata are as relevant today as they were then. For the benefit of present and future generations, he gave valuable tips to Bharata on good governance. While the whole of the Valmiki Ramayana is full of such administrative insights some sections appear to be more relevant and suggest

that modern management theory has much to learn from this ancient text. If Sri Ramachandra's advice to Bharata in Ayodhya Kanda offers lessons on good governance, his tips to his other brother Shatrughna, while the latter is preparing to fight the powerful demon Lavanasura, sounds like a modern strategic human resource management approach.

When Shatrughna is about to fight the demon Lavanasura, Sri Ramachandra gives some valuable advice to his brother who is taking Sri Ramachandra's chosen army for the battle. He elaborately tells Shatrughna how to look after the army personnel and keep his soldiers satisfied. He tells that there should be enough money and carriers to ensure sufficient and timely supplies. He says that the army which he has given to Shatrughna to fight the demon has been reared well and is a motivated and enthusiastic force with high morale. A well reared and satisfied workforce is dependable, loyal, and committed and cannot be beaten by any army. He further suggests Shatrughna to keep them happy by talking to them sweetly and taking care of the payment of their wages. The whole advice can be summed up in one sentence on the lines of the thought of the famous management guru, Philip Crosby: 'People don't work for companies; people work for people.' The essence thus lies in what the most prolific writer of management Peter Drucker had emphasized time and again. Management is about people and so one should look after one's personnel.

Epilogue

Besides these lessons on administrative wisdom, the other interesting feature of the Ramayana, is its

futuristic insight. Right in the beginning of the text is a description of the present era, *Kali Yuga*, given in elaborate terms and reading it one may think as if it is a narrative written in the present times. Such is the contemporariness that one can describe incidents happening today in terms of what has been written ages ago. It is worthwhile to ponder over the thoughts and actions of Sri Ramachandra and imbibe them. His life was his message and that is the lesson of the Ramayana. 

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Sri Ramachandra touching the feet of Mother Kaushalya



The Power of Faith

Swami Pavitrananda

JESUS CHRIST SAID, on one occasion: ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there”, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’¹ I don’t know, If I am a realist, whether it is possible that a mountain will physically remove from one place to another. But it is good to have that feeling in faith. It might not be possible for a mountain to go from one place to another, but this is sure, if you have faith, the mountain load of ignorance that has been incrusting in your life, from many past lives, will be removed. The mortal can become immortal; man can see the eternal light; man can know the law that rules the universe, that law which no scientist has been able to discover as yet, which no philosophy has been able to unravel. Simply by faith you can come face to face with great light; you come face to face with a divine illumination; you solve the riddle of existence, the mystery of life and death. That is much more than the physical removal of a mountain from one place to another. Perhaps Christ meant that a mountain load of difficulties will vanish in a trice, if you have real faith. The spiritual lives of many saints bear testimony to this fact.

To Christ came two blind men, who asked him, ‘Lord, have mercy on us.’ Christ said, ‘Do you believe in me?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ they said. And he touched their eyes and said, ‘Be it according to your faith.’² Again it may not be the removal of physical blindness. I would not say that, that Christ utilised his power to remove blindness. All these things are the interpretation of persons

who could not understand better. It is the removal of spiritual blindness. We are all in ignorance; we are blinded a thousandfold more than the physical blindness of the eyes. We are groping in the darkness for light, and do not know where we shall go. But, spiritual saints can touch the eyes, they touch a person and his blindness is removed. He sees the whole universe clothed in a different light.

Christ said, ‘Be it according to your faith. Do you believe that I can do that?’ When you have real faith in the divine mercy of God, when you feel that God is there—not as an omnipotent ruler, but in a kind compassionate relationship—when you have that faith, in a trice your blindness will be removed. This is evidenced by the incidents in the lives of many, many saints. In a trice a sinner—if I can use that word—becomes a saint; blindness is removed because of that faith.

But faith has to be cultivated. In the Bible we find: “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a mustard seed. By itself it is not better than any other seed, but when it is sowed it grows into a tree.”³ In the same way if you have a little particle of faith, you have to nurse it; you have to be careful to protect it; you should be particular that it grows, giving your affectionate care and earnest longing. Even if you have only a little particle of faith, as little as a grain of mustard seed, it will grow into a huge tree. It will grow into a banyan tree, where it will not only protect you; it will be of help to others.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the spiritual life is something like that of an oyster. There is a

kind of oyster which opens up and looks toward the sky. At a particular time, when a raindrop falls in it, it goes down, and that raindrop acts upon it and a pearl is created. In any case, the meaning is, if you have a little faith, you have to be careful to protect it, to nurse it into growth. Then, the result will come out.

And what is meant by faith? Faith is not just belief in a thing, belief in a creed, belief in something which reason cannot explain. Faith means more than that. Faith is an inner urge to attain something and the strength to oppose all difficulties that come. It is an inner urge to get something, and the belief that you can do that thing. It is not simply belief in a certain creed. Belief in a certain creed does not give you strength; that is not real faith. Real faith is an inner urge, an inner conviction, an intuition, that the goal is there, and that you can achieve it. You see, when that intuition comes from within, in spite of all difficulties you feel that it can be done. That has been the case in the life of saints, for they had a spiritual urge, a longing for the unknown. It is the unknown, but still they had the feeling that the unknown could be known, and any amount of difficulties did not daunt their spirit.

There have come difficulties in the lives of all saints. Think of Buddha. For six years he did spiritual practices, and he failed there; he did not get the result. Then, his inner urge came; he rejected all the things which he practised, and began a new set of spiritual practices which he himself discovered, out of his experience of failure in the past. And he sat under a tree and said: 'I will not leave this seat unless and until I realise the goal of life.' When he was so much determined, he was of course, tempted by Mara, difficulties come from within, but he remained undaunted in his faith. When there is so much faith, success is sure, and he had success. He brought the treasure of his wisdom for the good of humanity.

That is called real faith, faith which is active, faith which is dynamic, not simply inert, passive, lifeless faith. It is not that. Faith is dynamic; faith is strong; faith is positive; faith is that which can face any amount of difficulty, because there is the inner urge. When there is intuition, in spite of all difficulties, in spite of all whispering of the mind to the contrary, something within us says: 'No, that is not right. There is another way somewhere; there is some way to be found out.' That is real faith.

In any case, if you have a little faith, you have to be careful to protect it, to nurse it into growth. Then, the result will come out.

This kind of faith is useful, and is effective, not only in spiritual life, but in ordinary life also. It has been found that many scientists who have made profound discoveries had to struggle against difficulties. But, in spite of all difficulties, there was something within them which knew that some solution should be found, that there was no problem without a solution. They would struggle that way.

It is said of Edison that when he tried to create a particular kind of bulb, numerous times the experiments failed, and his assistants were in despair. But he was undaunted. He said: 'No, it has been an education. By all of these experiments, we know that these methods are not right. But still, there must be another way. It has been an education.' He tried again, and he succeeded. So, in ordinary life, there was something within him which said, 'Yes, there is a way out; there is a solution.' That is real faith.

Columbus went on a voyage, and everybody was in despair. His very crew was against him. But still, he stuck to his intuition; he had the faith that land would be seen. Land was seen, and America was discovered. This does happen in secular things, in material enterprises. The

same faith works on different levels, but the strength and utility of faith is always the same.

The question is where will you have faith? Some persons have faith in truth. They say, 'We will stand by the truth.' 'We shall follow the truth in spite of all failures, in spite of all difficulties.' They have so much faith in truth that they are ready to risk everything, to undergo any amount of loss, even all their property.

There is a story about a king whom God wanted to test.⁴ He lost his family, he lost all his property, he lost his only child, but still he stuck to truth. And when he lost everything, everything was found. God revealed himself, and gave everything back. It is in the form of a story, but it indicates that if we have so much faith in faith, if we have so much faith in truth that we are ready to risk everything, we get everything back.

Abraham Lincoln said: 'Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it.'⁵ He followed that, and therefore he became a great man.

Usually, we think, 'Let me have a little diplomacy; let us have a little cleverness.' And again, 'In this world, if you are so truthful, people will think that you are an ignorant person, a fool. Might is right. Let us have a little twisting of the truth; without diplomacy, we cannot get on in the world.'

But there are some persons who go against the current, who think in a different way. They think: 'Right is might.' So it depends upon what you have your faith in. Everyone has faith, somewhere or other. Some have faith placed in the right direction, though they go against all people. A majority of votes does not always indicate that you are on the right path. It is said that the majority is many times in the wrong, because we find the world in such a condition, and the world goes by the opinion of the majority.

Sometimes, one man is sufficient against all people. He will say: 'Right is might. Believe in the truth, and follow the truth, and things will work out for the best.' Such persons have so much faith, and for that faith they are ready to undergo any amount of suffering, any amount of loss, and things come out right afterwards; history proves that in many cases. Dishonesty is not always the best policy; honesty is the best policy, and it comes out all right.

In Vedantic literature, we find great emphasis laid on faith. It started on another premise, for Vedanta does not say that you are a sinner. From the beginning it says that human beings are the children of immortal bliss. In some religions, it is said that you have fallen from a high position. Well, if it is a fall, it indicates that your real position is the position of knowledge. You are not a sinner intrinsically; it was a fall from your high position. From the state of light you fall down, and you find yourself in darkness. Vedanta puts it in an emphatic way. It says, 'You are the children of light; you are the children of immortality. Just assert that.' That is the essence of Vedantic teaching. There is divinity hidden within each one of you, enveloped in ignorance, enveloped in darkness. Assert that. That is the real essence of Vedanta. It does not emphasise the idea that you are a grovelling sinner; it does not talk of repentance. It talks of asserting your birthright; it talks of claiming your inheritance; it talks of discovering your divinity. If it is a fall, it is a mistake. Just correct that mistake, remove that darkness. The darkness of a thousand years will go in a trice, when you get light. Think in terms of light; think in terms of going towards the ideal. Faith must be dynamic.

In Vedantic literature, the word *shraddha* is much emphasised, but *shraddha* cannot be translated into the word 'faith' because it means a great deal more. As I said, it means an inner urge, an inward confidence, and it is strength-giving. It

sustains you against all odds. The Bhagavadgita says: 'One who has faith will realise the truth.'⁶ The person who has no faith, the person who is always in doubt, will never succeed in spiritual life. So, in Vedanta, faith means faith in one's self, faith in the scriptures, faith in your teacher.

First, faith in yourself, that you can do that thing. Why should it not be possible for you to realise the goal which others have? Vedanta says: 'What logic is there that you will not be able to do it?' There are plenty of cases where men have gone down to the ordinary level of humanity, as it were, but they were raised, and at once they became saints. What logic is there that the same success will not be yours? Why should you be in doubt? Why should you have despair? If hopes dupe you, despair also fails. If you think you do not get what you hope for, it is also true that what you are afraid of does not happen. First, then, you must have faith in yourself, for the same possibility is within everyone.

Next, Vedanta says that you must have faith in the scriptures, scriptures embodying the spiritual

experiences of saints. It will give you encouragement and help. When you start on a journey, you must have a road map. When you start on your spiritual life, you must have the road map in the form of scriptures. The scriptures give you directions; the scriptures say what the difficulties are that will come in your way. Scriptures raise hope in you; they say that is the goal for you, and you will be able to reach that goal.

And then, Vedanta says that you must have faith in the teachers, in the teachers who have realised the truth in their life. It is there you come into personal contact with one who has realised the goal, and faith in him will be very important. Faith in him will give you great help and strength. In times of despair, in times of doubts, the faith that you have seen in a person who has known the truth will give you strength, and will give you consolation.

Vedanta emphasises faith in yourself, faith in the scriptures, faith in the teacher, but you must be fortunate to come into contact with a teacher who has known the truth.

Sri Ramakrishna at Navadwip



And why is it that the teachers get so much power? It is because they have passed through experience. They have passed through the experiences which lie ahead of you; they have reached the goal, and therefore they become powerful. There were some teachers who were not known so much, even in their lifetime, but still there was great power. After they passed away, they became powerful. In their lifetimes, they have been persecuted; they have been ignored, even ordinary saints. But afterwards, they were known.

Such was Spinoza. Throughout his life he suffered, physically and mentally, but he stuck to his faith. It is said that, when he was passing through grinding poverty, the king of France

Swami Vivekananda said that if you have to choose between your head and your heart, choose your heart.

offered him a chair of philosophy, but on the condition that he would have to teach according to dictation. He faced poverty instead of selling himself to make money. There were other offers, but he stuck to his faith, he was true to his own thoughts, and afterwards, when he died, he became great. His personality was unique because he stuck to his faith, and he became powerful.

There are many teachers, but there are true and false teachers. You can dupe some people all the time, all the people for some time, but not all the people all the time. So, the teachers become powerful because they have something within themselves. They have passed through experiences; they have known the truth, and therefore, if you come into contact with such a teacher, you can absolutely submit to him. His word is law; his word is more than strength to you. And the teacher also infuses strength in you, when you come into contact with a real teacher. He says: 'Be it according to your faith.' But he gives faith in you

when he says these words. Simply by his presence he infuses strength in you, gives you encouragement. It happened in the life of Christ, you know. He said, 'Be thou whole'⁷ and many persons became whole, became perfect. It can be done.

It was done, you could see, in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. When they came to him, some of his students were somewhat sceptical, or not in a mood to believe. But simply by a touch he could give them strength, he could give them faith. He could change the outlook of their lives altogether. So, if one is fortunate to come into contact with such a teacher, it becomes easier. For others also, help will come, if they are earnest.

How? You cannot explain these things. What is this faith? What is this inner urge? Can you rely on that? Those who are sceptical will ask: 'Can you rely on that inner urge?' They will say: 'Faith is simply an evidence of emotion. Can you rely on your emotions so much, against facts?'

Well, reason believes in facts, reason relies on facts, and finds out the conclusion from facts. But faith does not do that. When mathematics fails, faith comes in. In our life we want to go by mathematics. It is said that eighteen subtracted from twenty gives us two. It is arithmetic. But faith will say that we cannot go by arithmetic alone. In some things reason is altogether invalid and where reason falls, faith comes in. Faith, sometimes, is much more powerful than reason, if it is true faith. Intuition helps us, sometimes, much more than our reason. By reason we cannot solve all problems, for there is a great unknown region where reason does not go. It is true that in some spheres reason must be our guide, reason must be our strength and our light, but we do not have faith. So long as we have not got that faith it is good to go by reason, it is good to exercise our common sense. It is said that there is nothing uncommon in the lack of common sense in religious life. Some persons just give up

their faculty of reason. But it is not that. Take care of your reason, always remembering that there is a field beyond which reason does not go.

Faith has its value. As I said, simply by going by the inner urge some persons succeed. Spiritual life is going against the current; it has its own mathematics. So you cannot say that faith is simply an evidence of emotion. Yes, emotion is a part of life; emotion is also part of the divine dispensation. If the emotion is right, it will lead you on the right path. But still, until the right kind of emotion comes, let us have reason, and let us not forget that faith has greater validity, greater power than reason.

Swami Vivekananda said that if you have to choose between your head and your heart, choose your heart. You will find always that if you follow your real emotion, your real intuition, you will be correct. At least emotion is much more powerful than reason. So, in religious life, when the emotion is disciplined, and it goes in the right direction, then it becomes power. Afterwards, emotion becomes power, not reason. Reason is calculating, reason does not lead you far enough. But then comes emotion, if you are fortunate enough to have the right kind of intuition, if you are fortunate enough to have real faith.

As I said, some persons have faith in the truth, and some persons have faith in diplomacy. You have to choose between the two. But it has been found, those who have faith in the truth go much farther than those who have faith in diplomacy or cleverness. So faith has utility that way.

But the question is how to develop faith, at least in spiritual life. Well, in the beginning there is a conflict between reason and faith. You go by reason, and there is a little faith, but still you cannot trust your faith much. You must pass through a great period of struggle. As Christ asked, 'Do you believe in me?' We do not believe; we do not have the right faith. One must know that right

faith comes from realisation, when you have seen the thing, as a scientist does when working for a discovery. He has some intuition that it would be right, but he works hard for it. When he gets the result, then he finds out his real faith; he finds that it was a correct intuition.

In life also, when faith transforms itself into realisation it becomes real faith. Till then, it is a mixture of faith and reason; it is a struggle. So you must know that if you have even a particle of faith, it is enough to nurse it. Real faith will come when you have realisation; when you are face to face with God, face to face with the truth. That faith will never be shaken, for it will be invulnerable. You have seen the truth; you have known the truth tangibly; you have seen it with your own eyes, as it were. But till then you have to struggle, with a little particle of faith.

And, as I said it becomes easier if you can come into contact with a person who has known the truth, or who has burning faith. He is struggling so furiously, so vigorously, that in his sweep he carries others with him. Even if he has not realised the final goal of life, the faith in him is so contagious, so strong, that it carries others with him.

But if you do not come into contact with such persons, the next best thing is to read the lives of saints, and to read the scriptures. From there try to find out the sustenance of your life. And if you think and meditate on the scriptural passages, they will yield deeper and deeper meanings to you. In any case, you have to struggle, to nurse your faith, and in the scriptures, in the lives of saints, find out the examples, find out the illustrations from their lives, how they struggled. They too, had to pay a great price, in spite of their potentialities.

So when doubt arises in your mind, when there comes despair in your life, know that these are the laws of nature, these are the things which will come in your way. These things come in the way of even the greatest of saints. And your difficulties


will be solved; you will get encouragement if you read the scriptures, and the examples of the saints and their struggles. In that way you can grow.

And if you want to think logically, as I said in the beginning, what is there on the earth to prevent you from discovering your reality, from asserting your reality? Swami Vivekananda said that you do not know what great potentialities each one of you has. If there is so much power in an atom, how much more power is hidden within each individual being. You do not know yourselves; only the surface of things is known to you. The same potentialities are hidden within each one. If you think logically, there is no reason why you should not be able to reach the highest goal in life, if you can struggle earnestly enough. As far as logic is concerned, there is no bar to your progress. You can do anything.

When Swami Vivekananda said these things, he meant it literally. He did not say that simply to encourage people. He saw the possibility of each one of us, so he could not stand the idea that anybody would say: 'I cannot do that.' He could not stand the idea that anybody should have a lack of faith. The same possibilities are within each one. Life depends on faith, certain faith, simple faith. There was a saint who lived in Bengal one hundred or one hundred and fifty years before Sri Ramakrishna. That saint, praying to God as the Divine Mother, realised her as a fact. In Sri Ramakrishna's life, the main principle on which he struggled was: 'If, O' Divine Mother, you revealed thyself to Ramprasad, why not to me?' That was his strong point. He would be crying like a child: 'If it could be possible for Ramprasad, why not for me?' That can be said for all of us; if it could be possible for another man, for another saint, why not for us? On such a simple thing the edifice of a big life rests. Even a gentle soul like Sri Ramakrishna could not stand the idea that anybody should be lacking in faith, especially in religious

life. He would say in his own way that there are certain persons so inert, so lazy, so lifeless, they do not like to stand; they want always to lie down, as it were. They have no strength, no courage. This type of person cannot do anything. He would praise other persons for their vigorous faith.

He would say in his parables, illustrations brought from country life, that there is a kind of bull, if you touch its tail, it at once lies down. But there is another kind of bull, if you touch its tail, it begins to frisk. This shows that kind of bull has mettle, and he would praise very much those persons who have vigour in their lives, who have strength and dynamism in their lives. He said that these things are necessary, even in religious life. He praised Swami Vivekananda so much because he had mettle in life, because he had so much dynamism in him.

In religious life also that dynamism is necessary. It is true that at the end there comes self-surrender, in the end God's will is everything, but in the beginning you will find that you have your own will, you find that you have your ego. With your ego you should kill your ego; with your will you should destroy your will, to find out that the will of God is everything. Until you find out that God's will is everything you must exercise your will; you must be active; you must have faith in God; you must have faith in yourself. If you do, through the sheer power of faith you will realise the highest goal of human life. 

References

1. Matthew 17:20.
2. See Matthew 9:28-9.
3. See Matthew 13:31-2.
4. The reference is to the king Harishchandra.
5. Abraham Lincoln's Cooper Union Address on 27 February 1860 <<http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/cooperunionaddress.htm>> accessed 21 January 2015.
6. Gita, 4.39.
7. Mark 5:34.

Masonic Vedanta

Guy L Beck

(Continued from the previous issue)

Universal Religion

THE SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL motivations behind the desire of some Hindus to join the brotherhood suggest that they were willing participants in the idea of empire. Yet, as Harland-Jacobs reports, there were other contributing factors in their zeal:

A central argument for admitting Hindus, in fact, was the belief that the lodge might serve as a factory for building collaborators who were invested in and loyal to the empire. The enthusiasm with which elite Indian men joined Freemasonry suggests that Masonry did indeed contribute to this process. But indigenes had many different responses to imperial rule, responses that are much harder to gauge than the intentions of the powerful. What looked like collaboration might also have elements of manipulation. An indigenous man might join the brotherhood to endear himself to the British, but he might also use the brotherhood's ideology of cosmopolitan fraternalism to challenge the 'rule of colonial difference' that underlay imperial power and to demand equality with his British 'brothers'.¹⁰

One of the most powerful means by which Hindus could challenge British Freemasonry and its so-called universalism was to articulate a parallel Indian religious philosophy that would show that Hindus already had these same ideas but in a different guise. This came in the form of Vedanta. As it turned out, during the nineteenth-century, a revived philosophy of Vedanta, 'neo-Vedanta,' and its elaboration of the monotheistic character of the impersonal absolute

Brahman, proved to be the answer towards eventual parity between English Masons and Hindus. Neo-Vedanta concepts had found indigenous expression in the Hindu reform movements of the Brahmo Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission.

Neo-Vedanta and its monotheistic concepts had found indigenous expression in the Hindu reform movements of the Brahmo Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission.

Vedanta

Vedanta is derived from the ancient texts of the Upanishads, part of the Vedas. The Sanskrit word *veda* means knowledge, and *anta* means end, the end or culmination of all knowledge. The original Vedas, sacred hymns composed prior to 2000 BCE, are the oldest sacred texts among the Indo-Aryans. Four distinct Vedas include the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda. From these are derived the Brahmanas, elaborations and interpretations of Vedic rituals, the Aranyakas, forest treatises interpreting rituals and hymns symbolically, and the Upanishads, philosophical reflections on life and beyond.

The seminal treatise on Vedanta, Vedanta-Sutra (c. 400 BCE), summarised the teachings of the Upanishads in short aphorisms called sutras. A principle focus of Vedanta philosophy is the relationship between the individual soul, Atman and the Universal, Brahman. Depending on the interpretation, the status of the soul ranges from identity with Brahman to a minute particle of

Brahman. A strong non-dualist or monistic interpretation of Vedanta called Advaita Vedanta was established by Acharya Shankara (c. 800 CE). Prominent theologians following him, Ramanuja, Madhva, and Vallabha, were more inclined towards theism and the belief in a personified Brahman as Ishvara, supreme God. An early basis for Vedantic theism can be traced to the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, where the god Shiva, Rudra, is identified with Brahman.

In general, Vedantists affirm that all reality is Brahman, whereby all tangible and intangible features of the universe are inextricably linked together. Brahman is also said to be impersonal and unmanifest, *nirguna* Brahman, as well as personal and manifest, *saguna* Brahman, according to the plane of existence. The plane of manifest existence is bound by *desha-kala-nimitta*, space-time-causation, which is the realm of *saguna* Brahman or the phenomenal world permeated by dualism and multiplicity. *Nirguna* Brahman, which is beyond space-time-causation, is on the level of Advaita, non-dualism. The feature of sat-chit-ananda, being-knowledge-bliss, while not considered an attribute, is associated only with the realm of *nirguna* Brahman. The path of the Vedantist is to ultimately reach *nirguna* Brahman, described as the transcendental realm: 'For the Vedantist, the central goal of life focuses on successfully completing the journey from the phenomenal world, from a state of *jiva*, to the transcendental realm, to the realization of atman.'¹¹

Neo-Vedanta

Various aspects of Vedanta influenced the reformers and reform movements of the nineteenth-century Hindu Renaissance, including Sri Ramakrishna and the Brahmo Samaj. This phase in Vedanta is often termed neo-Vedanta. The Brahmo Samaj focused on the theistic side of Brahman, recognising Brahman as personal

in the form of God or Ishvara. While the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna stressed the Advaita or impersonal dimensions of Brahman, Sri Ramakrishna juxtaposed the personal aspect by worshipping the Goddess Kali through the path of bhakti, devotion. Ramakrishna taught a simple religiosity that allowed for multiple ways of approaching the same divine essence: 'On the basis of his experiences, Ramakrishna concluded that the various religions and sects are simply different paths that lead to the same goal.'¹² His teachings have been promulgated primarily by Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission.

Swami Vivekananda, as a former Brahmo Samaj member, Freemason, and follower of Sri Ramakrishna, eventually taught both aspects of Brahman, *nirguna* and *saguna*. Though initially repulsed by the non-dualism of Ramakrishna, he advised that humanity, while in the realm of *saguna* Brahman, must follow the path of Practical Vedanta. *Saguna* Brahman was also referred to by him as qualified monism, influenced by Ramanuja.¹³

Vivekananda often downplayed strict non-dualism in favour of a Practical Vedanta in the dualistic realm of *saguna* Brahman: 'He dismissed the distinction between a personal and impersonal god even more casually, suggesting that such a differentiation was analogous to an effort to distinguish fire from the heat it gives off.'¹⁴ The succeeding Vedanta movement in the West continued to blur the distinction between the impersonal Absolute and a personal God, as explained by Catherine Wessinger:

Neo-Vedanta in America offers a monistic view of reality that is ambiguous about whether the ultimate reality is personal or impersonal, whether the material world is real or unreal. The Vedanta movement in America, following Vivekananda, tends to view the ultimate reality as the unmanifest *nirguna Brahman*, but following the example of Ramakrishna, devotion (*bhakti*) to a personal

expression of deity is considered to be the most efficacious path to realization of the ultimate.¹⁵

Indeed, in the succeeding Ramakrishna movement, according to Carl T Jackson, 'Ramakrishna swamis often loosely equated the concept [of Brahman] with the Western notion of God' (69).

Historian Shamita Basu has revealed how the unifying principles of Vedanta adopted and modified by Swami Vivekananda were linked with the universalistic discourse of nationalism in India towards the close of the nineteenth century:

Religion was to be deployed as a form of meta-language through which the idea of unity of the people within a specific conception of Hinduism was to be conveyed and made intelligible. This is the national context in which the Advaita principles of Universalism was to be employed: to organize the sociologically decentralized

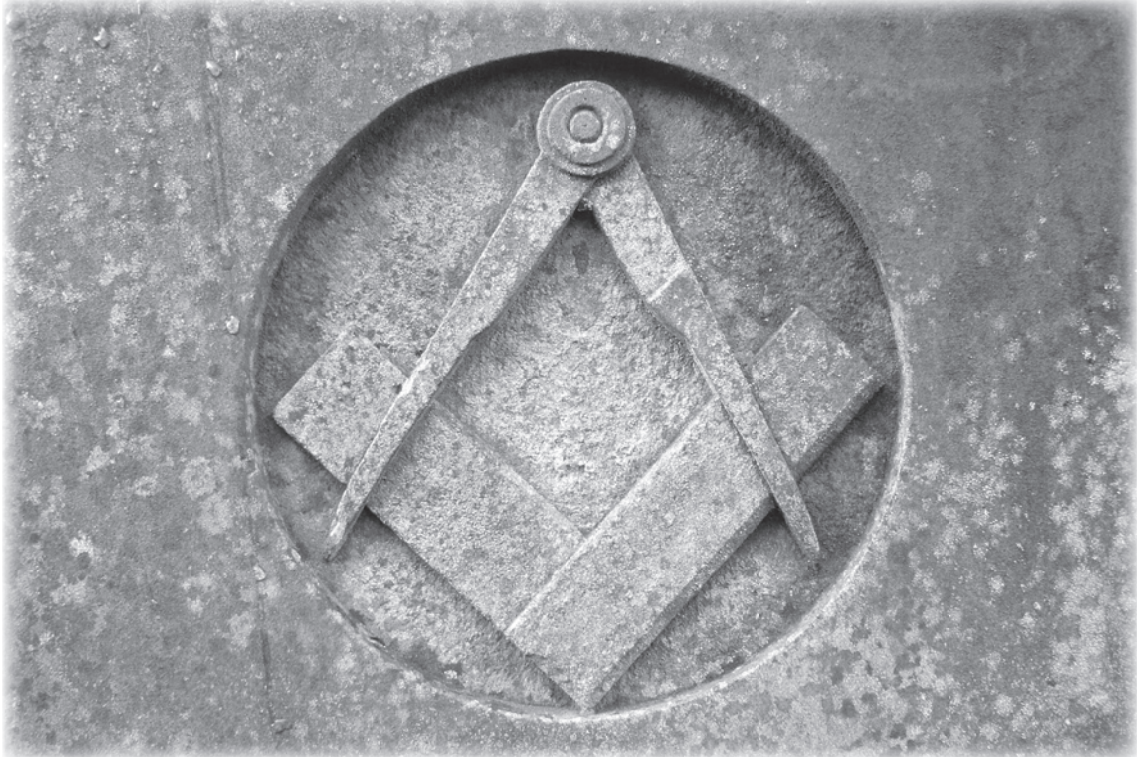
people by invoking a single abstract core of Hindu philosophy of non-dualism that is supposed to represent and incorporate all the sectarian beliefs, practices, and institutions of various communities. The universalization of Hinduism was one of the tasks that Vivekananda had set himself to achieve in his nationalist endeavor.¹⁶

Subsequent Vedanta or neo-Vedanta writers 'have tended to use "Vedanta" and "Hinduism" as practically synonymous and, indeed, as interchangeable terms to describe the essentials of Indian religious belief generally.'¹⁷

Hindus becoming Masons

By the 1870s British Freemasons began freely admitting Hindus, provided that they recognised a unified supreme Deity over and above the various Hindu gods and goddesses. Through a different interpretation of the Vedanta

Freemasonry Symbol



conceptions of unity in the form of a single Absolute called Brahman, deemed personal when necessary, Hindus could be viewed as 'monotheistic' by Masonic standards. The understanding and articulation of this feature was the single most important step in preparing Hindus for the successful Masonic journey. In short, a growing emphasis on 'monotheism', especially among upper-class and English-educated Hindus, was able to downplay the common perception that most Indians were polytheistic. Yet the actual process of admitting Hindus as full members went through numerous twists and turns.

Challenges to Hindu Masonry

While in theory the doors of Freemasonry were open to men of all races and creeds, the strict application of the Masonic principles of tolerance and equality by the English colonists proved to be a considerable challenge. Since Masonic lodges in Europe were almost exclusively staffed and governed by Europeans in the early years, the tenet of universal brotherhood vowed by them had not been seriously tested. The Duke of Sussex, as Grand Master in London, was determined to make Masonry a genuinely universal brotherhood, having stated in the 1840s that, 'Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may'.¹⁸ This principle had been in the minds of Masons both in England and in the colonies, but still remained to be applied. The first practical test of this tenet was placed before the lodges in India: 'It was in India that the truly universal nature of the Craft was to be shown.'¹⁹

In the early 1800s, European Masons in India extended membership to acknowledged monotheists such as Muslims and Parsees, but were reluctant to admit Hindus. Hindus appeared not as monotheists but as rampant polytheists, venerating a variety of anthropomorphic, human-like and theriomorphic, animal-like statues or idols

through a bewildering array of ritualistic practices and gestures. As mentioned by Masonic author John Hamil, 'It appeared to the nineteenth century English Masons in India that the Hindus had a multiplicity of gods and could not therefore satisfy the basic qualification for initiation: belief in a Supreme Being!' (ibid.). As such, most of the colonial Masons were devout Christians, albeit Protestants. Referring to this, Harland-Jacobs explained that 'as the Catholic Church waged a sustained campaign against worldwide Freemasonry, the brotherhood became a primarily Protestant institution.'²⁰ From the perspective of Christianity, whether Catholic or Protestant, the Hindus were idolaters of false gods and goddesses who believed in a variety of superstitions, thus declassifying them as candidates for membership in lodges that recognised one great Architect of the Universe. The liberal acceptance of non-Europeans in Masonry was further complicated by two events that occurred in mid-century: the Mutiny of 1857, causing Freemasonry's leaders to stop admission of all native-born candidates, and the re-enforcement of certain by-laws in the early 1860s by the Provincial Grand Master of Bengal.

The first Indian native to be initiated into Freemasonry was a Muslim, 'Omdat-ul-Omrah', eldest son of the 'Nabob of Carnatic, in 1775'.²¹ Next, some Parsees were admitted to colonial lodges in Bombay in the early 1800s. It is less surprising that Muslims and Parsees were admitted much earlier than their Hindu brethren, because of their visible submission to one supreme Being, and as they were more readily absorbed into the economic and political world of the English-speaking empire. Yet by the 1840s, only a small group of Indian Muslims and Parsees were members of the Craft. According to Harland-Jacobs, the admission of Indians at this juncture depended on several factors:

The candidate's religion and social status, the jurisdiction into which he sought inclusion,

sibling rivalry between English and Scottish lodges, and the attitudes of provincial Masonic leaders. During the 1840s, admission was unlikely, but not impossible (unless, of course, the candidate was a Hindu). The unrest of the subsequent decade brought the limited trend toward inclusiveness to a standstill.²²

Despite this situation, records have revealed a few exceptions to the exclusionary trend. As such, at least two South Indian Hindus were admitted in 1857. Brother Ranganath Sastry, belonging to the Brahmin caste, of Lodge Perfect Unanimity No. 233, according to G S Gupta, is now regarded as the first 'Hindu' mason, followed by Murugesha Mudaliar in Lodge Universal Charity, both in Madras. In fact, in Madras Between 1855 and 1869, Lodge Rock No. 260, initiated—besides a Muslim and a Parsee—a Mudaliar, Vellala, an agricultural labourer caste; Chetty, Vaishya, a merchant caste; Pillai, a Naidu, Kshatriya or warrior caste; an Iyengar, Vaishnava Brahmin, a priestly caste; and an Aiyar, Shaivite Brahmin, a separate priestly caste, six relatively different Hindu caste-names. Between 1863 to 1877, Lodge Rock initiated seventeen Hindus of seven different caste-names. This unprecedented occurrence of different castes willing to sit together and socialise 'on the level', was something unheard of in normal Indian society at that time. Another lodge in Madras was established in 1883, 'for the special benefit and convenience of native gentlemen'—the Carnatic Lodge No. 203.²³ However, things were more complicated religiously for the Hindu Masons, whose spiritual allegiance was normally tied to a family priest and a specific deity. Brother Pillai, a former District Grand Secretary of Madras, had recorded that 'candidates professing the Hindu religion were obligated by a Hindu priest who was taken into the lodge and returned, blindfold.'²⁴ That is, the candidate for initiation in the lodge was accompanied by his family priest, a non-Mason,

who was blindfolded so as not to observe the lodge from inside. The obligation or oath of the candidate involved the swearing upon a Volume of Sacred Law (VSL), but in order to consummate this event, the candidate's personal priest was invited into the lodge as a witness so that the candidate would give his sincere submission to 'God'. But this practice soon came under suspicion as the personal devotion to a specific deity in the Hindu pantheon could not be officially recognised as monotheism.

This unprecedented occurrence of different castes willing to sit together and socialise 'on the level', was something unheard of in normal Indian society at that time.

Hindu Responses

In response to denigrating criticism, nineteenth-century Hindus deployed various strategies in defense of their traditions, ultimately affirming the essentially monotheistic nature of Hindu religion. One of the early reform movements to do this was the Brahmo Samaj, established in Calcutta by Ram Mohan Roy in 1828. The Brahmo Samaj initiated a strong articulation of Vedantic monotheism among educated Hindus, such that the idea of Brahman was asserted to be akin to Western monotheism. The synthetic ideas of this movement reflect the early stages of neo-Vedanta, whereby Hindus were reacting to Western criticism of indigenous practices. There were also possible influences of Freemasonry at this time:

He [Ray] was chiefly inspired by 18th-century Deism (rational belief in a transcendent creator god) and Unitarianism (belief in God's essential oneness), but some of his writing suggests that he was aware of the religious ideas of the Freemasons (a secret fraternity that espouses some deistic concepts). Several of his [European] friends were members of the active Masonic Lodge in Calcutta.²⁵

The similarity between the Brahmo Samaj and Freemasonry can be deduced by examining the foundational beliefs of the Brahmo Samaj, published in an official statement: 'There is only one God, who is the Creator, Preserver and Sa-

The Hindu reformers of the nineteenth-century were thus true reformers in the sense of directing the Hindu tradition back to its Vedic roots.

viour of this world. He is spirit; He is infinite in power, wisdom, love, justice and holiness; He is omnipresent, eternal, and blissful. ... The human soul is immortal, and capable of infinite progress, and is responsible to God for its doings.²⁶ This helps us to understand how many Hindus were members of both the organisations, including the later Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda.

As in Freemasonry, reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj rejected icon or idol worship and caste distinctions. However, the rejection of icon worship and the repudiation of caste hierarchies in these movements were not articulated as new phases in Hindu thought. The arguments presented by reformers were that idols and caste were absent in the Vedic cult of sacrificial worship in ancient India, and only developed as aberrations under later Puranic and Tantric influences. Though the four *varnas*, class divisions, are mentioned in the Vedas,²⁷ they are not presented as binding or hereditary. A case was even made against the strict vegetarian diet of many Hindus, since the Vedic sages and forbears were believed to have sacrificed and consumed meat. The Hindu reformers of the nineteenth-century were thus true reformers in the sense of directing the Hindu tradition back to its Vedic roots by eliminating many of the so-called accretions that were viewed as mere degenerations, such as polytheism, idol worship, and rigid caste structures.

A supporting example may be found in the case of Zoroastrianism, an ancient Persian branch or offshoot of Vedic religion that survives today in India as the Parsees. After many centuries, they remain purely monotheistic, iconoclastic, non-vegetarian, and without strict social hierarchy.

Other forms of response to Masonic exclusionism sought resemblance in concepts from Hindu mythology. For example, out of the many deities mentioned in the Vedas and Puranas, Hindus would argue that they already had a 'Divine Architect' in the early figure of Vishvakarma, sometimes identified with Prajapati, who is present in the Rig Veda²⁸ as, 'the divine architect of the universe, the personification of creative power which welds heaven and earth together.'²⁹ Vishvakarma's importance is further extended in later Puranic Hinduism wherein he is described as a kind of master craftsman and builder: 'He [Vishvakarma] brought to perfection the science of Sthapatya, or architecture, and was the master of all the arts, of handicrafts, of carpentry, the maker of celestial chariots and fashioner of divine ornaments.'³⁰ This idea, coupled with the acceptance of the soul's immortality, would seem to favour Hindus being admitted to the Craft. The conclusive move, however, was made when all of the various gods and goddesses were proclaimed to be but symbols or aspects of the one true Brahman who was either personal or impersonal.

By-Laws

Although a few Hindus were entering the Craft in Madras and other more remote locations, this practice came under serious scrutiny and prohibition with the enforcement in the early 1860s of selected by-laws. Giving the Provincial Grand Master of Bengal a large degree of autonomy in matters of membership selection, the by-laws were regulations that were democratically enacted by the Provincial Grand Lodges but which in turn

might not reflect the general attitude of the Craft. The principal issues raised by these regulations barring native Hindus from membership seemed to revolve around their religious beliefs and their social standing via the caste system. Their religious beliefs also in turn made it difficult to convince conservative members that a binding oath could be enacted upon them. As a result, by-laws were established in the colonial lodges that could be used to provide obstacles to native membership. According to Gupta, 'The obstinate Christian ethics and class consciousness of the English, especially in the Presidency towns, led Bengal to enact and use the Provincial By-Law No. 55, which became notorious later on, in 1860s when it was used to prohibit the initiation of any Asiatic, without the previous approval of the Provincial Grand Master.'³¹

The by-laws were not consistent, however, since it was not only polytheism that prevented membership; even other monotheistic traditions like Islam were held with reservation. By-Law No. 55 stated that, 'no Mohammedan or other Asiatic shall be initiated in any Lodge without previous sanction of the Provincial Grand Master'.³² Since this statement was not in logical congruence with the tenets of the Craft as established by the English founders, the regulation was vulnerable to being challenged by educated native Indians seeking admission. This proved to be the case with one very determined Bengali gentleman, Prosonno Coomarr Dutt, who brought these issues to the open attention of the Craft in England in a long drawn-out, nine-year negotiation.

(To be continued)

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A Monk's Journeys in China

Swami Durgananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS ARTICLE the infrastructure in China was depicted which included trains, buses, roads, railway and bus stations, shops, parks, and other conveniences. In this second part, we look at the religious life of China.

There are three major religions in China today: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. These religious streams are overlapping in their practices. Incidentally, all began in the sixth century BCE, which is the middle of what the German philosopher Karl Jaspers calls the Axial Age, from 800 to 200 BCE, when similar religious awakenings took place in Persia, India, China, and the West.

Confucianism

Confucianism is not exactly a religion, it is a philosophy. Confucius (551–479 BCE), also called Kongzi or Kongfuzi in Chinese, was a politician and a philosopher. He was born just before what is known as the 'Warring States Era' in China (c. 475–221 BCE) when the political authority of the ruling Zhou Dynasty diminished and many vassal states fought and competed for supremacy. This was coupled with a general moral decline. Confucius served first as a magistrate, then as a minister of justice of the state of Lu, the present Qufu. This genius of a thinker, frustrated with the indifference of the ruling hierarchy to his ideas and precepts, left his state and travelled to other feudal states to render his service, but had to return home, unsuccessful in his mission. Yet, all the while, the

number of his followers increased to about three thousand even as he was living.⁴

Confucius's philosophy is ethical and socio-political. Its ingredients are humaneness, justice, knowledge, integrity, righteousness, honesty, modesty, and gentlemanliness; and it is based on the Chinese tradition and beliefs including family loyalty, respect for elders, ancestor worship, and the like. Some of his famous sayings are: 'What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others';⁵ 'By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is the noblest; Second, by imitation, which is the easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest'; and 'I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand'.

Confucianism became the official state ideology during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) when its metaphysical and cosmological elements developed. However, it later fell out of royal favour. Intermittently, Taoism also enjoyed royal patronage.

In Confucius temples, Confucius himself is worshipped and his texts, tradition, and philosophy are preserved. Confucius temples have traditionally been centres for the civil servant examinations because Confucius laid prescriptions about how the state administration should be. Many of his temples, found everywhere in China, have large campuses. Some have developed into large areas which include traditional and historical places associated with Confucianism and Chinese tradition. Of course, there is an absence of soteriological and divine elements in

the temples as the philosophy seems to be 'world sanctifying' as opposed to 'world renouncing'. There is no monasticism or priesthood in Confucianism. The temples are maintained by strong adherents to his philosophy and by the government.

The most famous Confucius temple is in Qufu, the birthplace of Confucius, about 500 km south-east of Beijing. The temple area extends 1.3 km in length, has 9 courtyards, 466 rooms, and 54 gateways. The Fuzimiao Confucius temple area in Nanjing is about one square-kilometre in size. It is full of historic places connected with administration and tradition. The Confucius temple itself is a small 14 m by 20 m building.

Taoism

The originator of Taoism, Lao-Tzu, Lao-tze, or Laozi, lived in the fifth or sixth century BCE. He worked as the custodian of government archives at the royal court of the Zhou dynasty.⁶ As per legend, he grew weary of the moral decay of life in the kingdom and set out on a water-buffalo to live as a hermit beyond the western frontier of the state. At the gate, the gatekeeper, recognising him as a wise man, asked him to write down his wisdom, which Lao-tse did. This gatekeeper then became his disciple and both became hermits never to be seen again.

It is this writing that is the famous Tao Te Ching, comprising of only five thousand Chinese characters in eighty-one small chapters. Its main theme is the indescribable Tao, pronounced 'Dao'. The Tao could be seen to be the same as Brahman in its immanent, transcendent, static, and dynamic aspects. For example, the Tao Te Ching says:

The tao that can be described
is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be spoken
is not the eternal Name. ...
Yet mystery and reality
emerge from the same source.
This source is called darkness.

Darkness born from darkness.

The beginning of all understanding.⁷

This and the following verses are reminiscent of the Nasadiya Sukta in the Vedas:

The Tao is like an empty container:
it can never be emptied and can never be filled.
Infinitely deep, it is the source of all things.
It dulls the sharp, unties the knotted,
shades the lighted,
and unites all of creation with dust.

The ingredients of Confucius's philosophy are humaneness, justice, knowledge, integrity, righteousness, honesty, modesty, and gentlemanliness.

It is hidden but always present.
I don't know who gave birth to it .
It is older than the concept of God. ...
Before the universe was born
there was something in the chaos of the heavens.
It stands alone and empty,
solitary and unchanging.
It is ever present and secure.
It may be regarded as the Mother of the universe.
Because I do not know its name,
I call it the Tao.
If forced to give it a name,
I would call it 'Great'.⁸
The Tao is nameless and unchanging.
Although it appears insignificant,
nothing in the world can contain it.⁹

Thus, Tao is not only the Reality and the spiritual principle but also the 'way'. Tao may be compared with the Logos of Greek philosophy and the Ritam—Reality as an eternal self-regulating universal order or harmony—of the Indian philosophy. How Ritam and hence the Tao can be the way is lucidly explained by Swami Bhajananda: "The Vedic idea of Yajna may be described as "participation" in the living drama of the cosmos."¹⁰ He further writes:

All that we have to do is to maintain intense aspiration and to convert our entire life into a

yajña by opening ourselves, surrendering ourselves, fully to the creative powers of universal Life. Aspiration alone is ours, all work is done by the Divine. Evolution is not an individual affair. It is a cosmic movement. All the power needed for spiritual progress comes from universal Life. When through *yajña* we open ourselves fully to it, it will bring about all the changes we need and will augment our evolutionary elan. All the logs needed to fuel spiritual evolution are there in universal Life; all that we need is an altar to build up the flames.¹¹

The ‘way’ according to Tao Te Ching includes *wu-wei*, which may be translated as ‘aligning self-will to the cosmic will’; *zìrán*, naturalness, surrender, spontaneity; *pū*, returning to the ‘original state’; and *sānbāo*, three virtues of compassion, moderation, and humility.¹²

Initially, Taoism was only a philosophy. It was based on Lao-tze’s Tao Te Ching and a similar work *Zhuangzi* by a person of the same name of the fourth century BCE. It was only in the second century CE that Taoism became an institutional religion¹³ with the founding of the ‘Way of the Celestial Masters’ by Zhang Daoling.¹⁴ Almost

A Taoist Monk at the
Chongshou Temple



since its formation, ritual, alchemy, exorcism, shamanism, sorcery, animism, mythology, and many popular beliefs entered into it.

How the pure abstract doctrine of Lao-tze was turned into a medley of alchemy, witchcraft, astrology, and such other things is a different story altogether. Suffice it to say that today’s

Taoism has a lot of astrology, alchemy for longevity, scripture reading, and ritual in addition to the mystic element. Taoism may be practised as an adherent, or as an initiate. The initiate may be a married priest, *Zhengyi*, or a monk *Quanzhen*. The latter are celibates, eat vegetarian food, and live in a monastery, for example, the White Cloud Monastery in Beijing. There are very few nuns in Taoism as of today. The Taoist priests, who are householders, officiate in domestic rituals. Taoists spend a lot of time divining and selling talismans called *Fu*—these are available in street shops. As our tour continues, we look at a few Taoist places of pilgrimage that the author visited.

Maoshan Mountain • Situated near Nanjing, this mountain has sheltered Taoism since 153 BCE. Various temples and monasteries are spread over an area of about fifty square kilometres on this mountain. In the main Chongshou temple, the ‘Three Pure Ones’ regarded as pure manifestations of the Tao and are the origin of all sentient beings are worshipped as deities. The mount is also the cradle of the Shangqing sect of Taoism. The Shangqing sect values meditation techniques as opposed to the use of alchemy and talismans. The school has, however, changed over centuries progressively until talismans and rituals became a more important aspect. One can see in these places priests practising fortune telling, talisman making, and the like. On another hill on the same mountain, in an area called the ‘Taoist Square of Primordial Talisman’, is the famous thirty-three-meter high bronze, gold plated, statue of Lao Tzu.

Mount Laoshan • Mount Laoshan is situated on the seashore of the East China Sea near Qingdao. It is here that Quanzhen, the monastic branch of Taoism, developed. The famous Buddhist scholar Faxian (337–422 CE) halted here after returning from India. The entire hill, consisting of granite rock, has been beautified now and has been made a scenic area and a tourist attraction—there is a

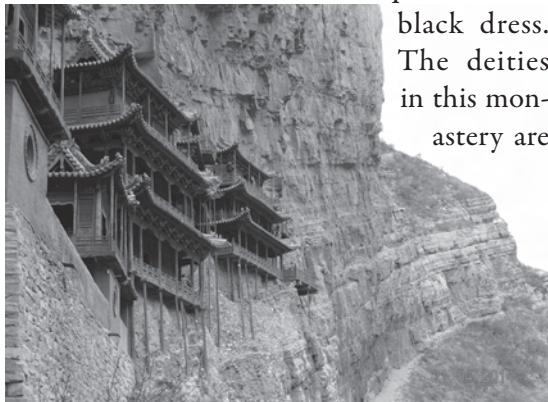
cable car for going up. With its machined and carved stone-ways and railings, relief-lotuses in stone to walk on, greenery, rocky surroundings, large boulders, and an enchanting view of the ocean, it is a pleasure to visit this place.

The mount was known to have magic herbs which could cure all diseases and make one immortal. Emperors Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BCE) and Wu of Han (156–87 BCE) are known to have climbed this mountain in search of these wondrous plants. Later, Xuanzong, the emperor of the Tang dynasty (c. 8 CE), sent envoys to collect these miraculous herbs to prepare for him an elixir of life.

The famous Taoist temple Taiqing Gong, the temple of supreme Purity, is located here, in which the Three Pure Ones are worshipped. There are many other Taoist temples and some Buddhist icons and statuettes on this mount. The Huayan monastery, which housed Buddhist nuns in the past, is the only Buddhist site on the mount. Only a few monastics live there now.

Zhang Guolao Monastery • This monastery on the Heng Mountain, near Datong, 350 km west of Beijing, is at a height of about two thousand metres above sea level. The monastery and its temples sit on the steep slope on a rocky mountain. Some buildings have been constructed along one side of a vertical cliff. We see a few Taoist

Hanging Monastery



priests here in black dress. The deities in this monastery are

Guandi, who has immense control over evil spirits; Wenchang, god of culture and literature; a Taoist mythological deity, Fu Lu Shou, three gods, respectively, of fortune, prosperity, and longevity of the Chinese traditional religion; and so on. Guandi, or Guan Yu, was a general of the Eastern Han dynasty (c. 3 CE) who was later deified as the god of war. The Huixian Cave is situated here where legendary fairies of ancient times are believed to have practised alchemy.

Hanging Monastery • Eighty kilometres from Datong city, this one thousand and five hundred year old monastery precariously rests on a precipice about 75 m above the ground. The body of the entire structure hangs from the middle of the cliff. It is a place known to have sheltered all three major religions in China: Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. It is uninhabited now, but pilgrims can go inside and take a look.

Buddhism

Buddhism has three broad branches: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Theravada is popular in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand; Mahayana in China, Japan, and Korea; and Vajrayana in Tibet, China, and Japan.

Theravada is the earliest branch of Buddhism. Mahayana probably arose to fill the need for grace and devotion and also to provide a philosophy of religion to the laity—elements that were lacking in Theravada. According to Mahayana philosophy, a highly evolved soul called the Bodhisattva, renounces voluntarily and joyfully one's personal Nirvana for helping others cross the ocean of transmigration, having been overpowered by great compassion. The grace is conveyed through the transfer of the Bodhisattva's own merit to the recipient. The third school, Vajrayana, an esoteric school, developed in India sometime in the seventh century CE by the absorption of Tantra that flourished during the Golden Age (4–6 CE) in



Statue of Guanyin at Putuoshan

India. It travelled to China the same way as Buddhism did, by the Silk Route.

The deities worshipped in the Buddhist temples in China are Buddha—usually the sitting posture of Buddha—and various Bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, Skanda, Mahasthamaprapta, and the Bodhisattva Guanyin. Guanyin, literally meaning ‘observing the sounds of the world’, is a female form of the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva, and is associated with mercy and compassion. One finds in many places in China a picture or a statue of Guanyin as a beautiful lady wearing a white flowing robe displaying a gesture of blessing.

There are four famous places of pilgrimage, called Bodhimandas in China, all on mountains and roughly one thousand and five hundred km apart, similar in importance, location, and equally revered as the four *dharmas*, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri in India. These are: Mount Putuo in the east, Mount Emei in the west, Mount Wutai in the north, and Mount Jiuhua in the south dedicated respectively to the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteshvara as Guanyin, Samantabhadra, Manjushri, and Kshitigarbha. Of the four, Putuo and Wutai Bodhimandas, which the author visited, will be described next.

Mount Putuo • This is a mountain on an island about 7 km long and 2.5 km wide, and about

200 km south-east of Shanghai. There are fast boats from Shanghai to Putuoshan that travel at a speed of 80 kmph. Alternatively, one may take a bus which travels on the scenic six-lane Shenhai Expressway. The author took this road. Much of it is elevated; it also goes over marshlands, lakes, wetlands, and other beauties of nature. The expressway then crosses the Hangzhou Bay in the East China Sea on the 35 km long six-lane bridge, the longest trans-oceanic bridge in the world, and enters mountains, into scenic beauty. The experience was elevating.

It is said that in the ninth century a Japanese monk was carrying a statue of Guanyin from Wutai to Japan. When he reached this island to cross over to Japan, a storm broke out. Guanyin appeared to him and asked him to leave her there. Once he agreed, the storm abated suddenly. He then built a temple for her there. In the same place, now stands the ‘Reluctant to Leave Monastery’. The cave where the goddess appeared can also be seen nearby. There are thirty major temples and more than fifty monasteries on the island today. A twenty metre high bronze statue of Guanyin on a thirteen metre high pedestal is a sight to behold. The Putuo Island is vibrant with an atmosphere of devotion. A sense of spiritual elevation can be sensed everywhere on the island. Seeing how people go from temple to temple, bow, kneel, pray, offer incense, and cry begging for mercy melts one’s heart.

Mount Wutai • This is another of the four Bodhimandas in China. It is on the Taihang Mountains about 400 km west of Beijing at an altitude of 3,000 metres. It is dedicated to the Bodhisattva Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom. About 150 km away from the plains, this pilgrimage area is a valley approximately 50 km in length and 12 km in width surrounded by five terrace-like peaks with temples on each of them.

It is said that Emperor Ming of the Han

Dynasty saw in a dream a god whose body had the brilliance of the sun and who flew before his palace. The next day he asked his officials: 'What god is this?' They said: 'We have heard that in India there is the one that is known as the Buddha, who flies in the air, whose body has the brilliance of the sun; this must be that god.' The emperor then sent an envoy to India. The envoy returned to Luoyang, the then capital of China, with two monks, Dharmaraksha or Zhu Falan and Kashyapa Matanga or She Moteng. They brought with them on a white horse Buddhist scriptures, and spent the rest of their lives in China translating them. This was the first entry of Buddhism into China. The emperor established in 68 CE, a Buddhist temple known as the White Horse Temple in Luoyang. These two monks divined that Mount Wutai has spiritual vibrations and is a place for the Manjushri Bodhisattva.

Another popular legend is about the first Buddhist temple in Wutai. A Buddhist monk beseeched the Han emperor to construct a temple in Wutai. Taoism was prevalent in China then, and Taoists came out in protest of the new religion. As a test, scriptures of both religions were thrown into a fire in front of the emperor. The Taoist scriptures burned but the Buddhist ones remained intact. It was then that the first

temple in Wutai, the Xiantong Temple, was built sometime in 76 CE.

At one time, there were three hundred and sixty temples in Wutai, now only about fifty remain. There are about fifty monasteries now, and in addition, there are caves, hills, and other sites of religious significance. Almost at the central location in Wutai is the famous stupa Sarira, which contains a relic of the Buddha. The deities worshipped in Wutai are Manjushri and other Bodhisattvas including Guanyin.

The entire pilgrimage area is quiet and serene. It is well developed with broad roads, various amenities, new buildings, good transport, and other conveniences, making it a joyful visit. The snow-clad Wutai mountains, the lakes, the artistically winding pathways around lakes, parks, flower gardens, stone gardens, cactus gardens, well-maintained avenue plantations—are all enthralling and uplifting. It is quiet even in the city, much more so at the temples that are spread across the entire area.

Potala Palace • The famous Potala palace was built by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in 637 CE in his capital city of Lhasa. This strong palace, 1,40,000 sq m in area, rests on a hill and rises 300 m from the ground. It has been the seat of the Dalai Lama since Gendun Drup was pronounced the first Dalai Lama in 1391 CE. Tibetan people are very religious. One can see people doing

Potala Palace, Lhasa



continuous prostrations circumambulating the Potala palace. Some continuously repeat, in front of a temple, a sequence which starts from standing with raised arms and ends in full supine prostration—and this is done from six in the morning till noon! There are many monasteries in the area. One among them is the Sera Monastery, a school of higher education, famous for its debating sessions. **Yungang Grottoes** • The Yungang Grottoes in Datong are similar to the Ellora caves except that these are not very deep and are hence called

That China has made tremendous progress and taken rapid strides in development is an undeniable fact. India needs to derive inspiration from it.

grottoes. When Buddhism arrived in this area by the North Silk Route, the construction of these grottoes began in the year 460 CE under the patronage of the Northern Wei Dynasty. There are 252 grottoes and more than 51,000 Buddha statues and statuettes here. The carvings depict the Buddha, the Bodhisattvas, and scenes from the Buddha's life. The carved figures are worn out considerably in comparison with the Ellora caves although both sites were built in the same period. The reason for this difference is that the Ellora caves are cut into basalt rock which is an igneous, volcanic, rock formed by cooling lava, while the Yungang area has soft sandstone which is formed from cemented grains of sedimentation and their subsequent compaction by overlying deposits, and is thus softer and susceptible to wear and tear.

It is notable that Chinese places of pilgrimage have an absolute absence of litter, dampness, and dirt—they are clean, modernised, surrounded by state-of-the-art amenities and endowed with well developed systems and facilities while the temples themselves are preserved in their pristine antiquity. Many places are breathtakingly

charming—lakes adorned with treatment of the shores, artificial caves made from boulders, small bridges, curvaceous footpaths to walk around, cable cars for long climbs, and plenty of municipal transport—all this in the enthralling beauty of the spiritually elevating atmosphere.

The limitation of space prevents from describing many other important religious places such as the Ashoka temple in Ningbo, the Lingyin monastery—founded by an Indian monk in 328 CE—in Hangzhou, Lingshan Buddhist Wonderland—opulent display of Buddhism—in Wuxi, Sera Monastery—Gelupa university monastery in Tibet, Fengdu Diyu or Naraka city near Chongqing, and so on. All these have Indian terminology, concepts, and the culture of ancient India.

One may summarise the religious climate of China as follows. Confucianism has remained a socio-political philosophy, with not much of the divine or spiritual element. Taoism has absorbed many elements of Buddhism, yet its own innate spiritual elements have been somewhat covered with superstition, leaving Buddhism, mainly Mahayana Buddhism as the only major religion, with a spiritual attitude in China.

Conclusion

China has modernised itself recently. The buildings appear chic and shining. The footpaths, railings, public toilets are well maintained or near new. Restaurants are clean, elegant, and with modern systems of cooking, display of menu, serving of food, and the method of payment. Some of the malls are more classy and deluxe than those generally found in the US. Many places clearly show modernity and affluence in addition to convenience. We see escalators in public places, in railway stations, and in large shops. The long distance buses and city buses are brand new or almost new even in villages, and even the cable cars are new. Railway stations and bus stations are like those in

the West—most are like airports. Uniforms, work culture, and professionalism of the police, train ticket examiners, bus drivers, and taxi drivers are just as in developed countries. The police use cars exactly of the same design as that in the US. We see recreational trails in China in forests and hills, as in advanced countries, used for walking, for physical fitness and recreation. There are signboards everywhere—none of the signboards appears to be rusted, bent, or neglected. There are well maintained hedge plantations, decorative bushes not only in cities but also along highways and freeways over long distances. Often one sees lengthy stretches of flowers in them.

That China has made tremendous progress and taken rapid strides in development is an undeniable fact. India needs to derive inspiration from it. The Chinese experiment must become a part of Indian learning. It should shake her up from deep slumber, long weariness, and inured inactivity. After all, India has a much more glorious past, solid and noble, extending over millennia in the past. She has a great legacy, inheritance, endowment—momentum of this hoary heritage cannot be stopped although it seems to be resting. This dormant energy will rise again like a wave. Swami Vivekananda, the modern seer, foretold at Ramnad in 1897: 'She is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'¹⁵ But India must work hard for it. Again, Swami Vivekananda's powerful and inspiring words are a fitting finale: 'Let us all work hard, my brethren; this is no time for sleep. On our work depends the coming of the India of the future. She is there ready waiting. She is only sleeping. Arise and awake and see her seated here on her eternal throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than she ever was—this motherland of ours' (3.154). ☯

Notes and References

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5. This is typically reminiscent of the Golden Rule in the Bible, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you' (Matthew 7:12), and could be perhaps termed as a restatement of the famous Hindu dictum, 'Do not do unto others what you think is detrimental to your own welfare' (Mahabharata, 5.15.17).
6. See 'Taoism' in *The New Encyclopaedia Americana*, 30 vols (Danbury: Grolier Academic, 1998), 26.276.
7. Chris Corrigan, *The Tao of Holding Space* (California: Creative Commons, 1996), 3. <https://ia600506.us.archive.org/5/items/TheTaoOfHoldingSpace/Tao_of_holding_space.pdf> accessed 22 January 2015.
8. Note that the word Brahman comes from the root *brih*, which means 'great' or 'vast'.
9. *The Tao of Holding Space*, 6, 27, 34. These reminds us of the statement from the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.4.1: 'Failing to reach which, words, along with the mind, turn back'; or the *Nasadiya Sukta*, 'Then even nothingness was not, nor existence'; or the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.1, 'From that Non-being arose Being', or the peace chant of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, 'That is full, this is full, from fullness comes fullness, taking fullness from fullness, fullness indeed remains.'
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Memory

Swami Satyamayananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

Regression

TO REGRESS: to go back to a worse state. Regression is a form of genuine memory loss. A person forgets everything and regresses to a state of mental infancy. Paradoxically she or he remembers to smoke if it was a habit and uses his or her vocabulary. All regressed memories can be recalled during hypnosis, hence it is not a question of plain erasing of memories.

Phenomenal Memory

Sharat Chandra Chakravarty, Swami Vivekananda's disciple, in Belur Math, 1901, was admiring the new set of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, remarking that it was impossible to read them all in a single lifetime. He was not aware that Swamiji had already finished reading ten volumes and had started on the eleventh. At Swamiji's urging, the disciple commenced to quiz him on any topic from the ten volumes. Swamiji not only reproduced the sense but at places the very language of the difficult topics selected from each volume. Astonished the disciple said, 'This is not within human power.' Swamiji then replied, 'Do you see, simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya (continence) all learning can be mastered in a very short time—one has an unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once.'¹¹ A similar incident happened in Meerut. A librarian, who could not believe that Swamiji could read all the books he had borrowed in such a short time, tested him and became astounded. Swamiji later confessed to his brother disciple Swami Akhandananda, 'I never

read a book word by word. I read sentence by sentence, sometimes even paragraph by paragraph, in a sort of kaleidoscopic form.'¹² A Russian psychologist, Alexander R Luria, in his book, *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, made a well-documented case in the 1920s. It referred to 'S', Solomon Shereshevski, a subject who had indelible memory and could recall things even after many years, not only in their original order but also backwards. Only with 'S' this great gift was beyond his capacity to handle it and later suffered from personality disorders. So a mere capacity to store and recall information is not everything.

Swami Vivekananda on Smriti, Memory

Psychology was the domain of philosophy. Pure psychology still is, because the various studies raise philosophical and ethical issues that are beyond the scope of psychology. In this section we shall try to see what the Indian sages and saints experienced and taught. Before proceeding it ought to be emphasised that memory is linked to a deeper dimension of man, and the sages were more interested in revealing this dimension. Swami Vivekananda said: 'Suppose I go into the street and see a dog. How do I know it is a dog? I refer it to my mind, and in my mind are groups of all my past experiences, arranged and pigeon-holed, as it were. As soon as a new impression comes, I take it up and refer it to some of the old pigeon-holes, and as soon as I find a group of the same impressions already existing, I place it in that group, and I am satisfied. I know it is a dog, because it coincides

with the impressions already there.¹³ In *Raja Yoga* Swamiji explains how these impressions become habits, 'each action is like the pulsations quivering over the surface of the lake. The vibration dies out, and what is left? The Samskaras, the impressions. When a large number of these impressions are left on the mind, they coalesce and become a habit. It is said, "Habit is second nature", it is first nature also, and the whole nature of man; everything that we are, is the result of habit' (1.207). He explains how the coalesced impressions which have become a habit operate in a single act: 'There are certain works which are, as it were, the aggregate, the sum total, of a large number of smaller works. If we stand near the seashore and hear the waves dashing against the shingle, we think it is such a great noise, and yet we know that one wave is really composed of millions and millions of minute waves. Each one of these is making a noise, and yet we do not catch it; it is only when they become the big aggregate that we hear' (1.29).

This raises the question: is thought not as simple as it seems? And the answer is an emphatic NO! An illustration will help recapitulate Swamiji's explanations. A person desiring to watch a favourite television show lifts the remote control. This action, karma, is like slightly opening a door and peering into a long dimly lit corridor with rows of doors on either side. The opening of the principal door has acted like a signal to the doors in the corridor and they simultaneously start swinging open and reveal rooms even more dimly lit. Each room in the corridor has a back door that opens into dark chambers that spill their contents like water in the dimly lit rooms. These dimly lit rooms now spill out into the corridor and the torrent pulls the principal door ajar. This is what happens each time one does anything. The dark chambers are the places where *samskaras* reside; they charge out and combine in the rooms of habits. This room now spills into the corridor of karma and from the

corridor, spills out the karmas that surge towards the principal door to ignite into a single large tangible karma. The opening of doors is like feeding time for all the teeming denizens inside. Once fed, they return to their respective lairs, doors closing behind and their numbers increase to take on a similar trip when cued. These are the terrible corridors, rooms, and chambers of the mind, all linked to each other forming a vast region. The person, who on the conscious plane, wants to watch television does not face just one door but

Karma is like slightly opening a door and peering into a long dimly lit corridor with rows of doors on either side.

is surrounded by innumerable ones, up and down included, opening and closing all the time. Well, who watches television? Even in sleep there is no respite, for then dreams and memories take over completely. Only in deep sleep does everything quiet down.

Alayavijnana, the Subconscious Mind

The rigorously worked out philosophy of the Buddhists *Yogacharas*—the *Kshanika Vijnanavadins*, holders of the doctrine of momentary consciousness, had one big problem when trying to fit into it the doctrine of karma. Being alluded to repeatedly by Lord Buddha it just couldn't be brushed aside. The *Yogacharas* hold that sentient beings are made of aggregates, *skandas*, comprising of *rupa*, matter, *vedana*, sensations, *samjna*, perception, *samskara*, volition, and *vijnana*, consciousness. *Vijnana* was divided into six categories consisting of five sensory and one *manovijnana*, discrimination. All these were interdependent, impermanent, arising in relation to others, and momentary. This doctrine was attacked by the Vedic tradition. One of the questions asked was: where did the impressions lie to fructify as karma if everything

is momentary? In the absence of such a receptacle the next aggregate of karma cannot arise and Buddha's teaching that karma has its effects shall get negated. The next question was regarding memory; if everything was in constant flux then how and where do things register? To plug this hole in their philosophy the *Yogacharas* brought forward the agency of *Alayavijnana*. This is a part of *vi-jnana* that functions as a receptacle for the *bijas*, seeds of karmas, which will fructify into another sentient being but without cutting the thread from the former. *Alayavijnana* can be termed as the receptacle of memory or karma, the vast store of the subconscious regions of the personality.

Nature of Matter Composing the Mind

Vedanta holds that the mind is made of matter but does not take the brain for the mind. Vedanta teaches that the *sukshma sharira*, the subtle body, made of fine matter, *tanmatras*, acts not only through the brain but also through every micrometer of the body. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* states how this takes place: 'In him are those nerves called Hita, which are as fine as a hair split into a thousand parts, and filled with white, blue, brown, green and red (serums).'¹⁴ These nerves are the channels of the subtle body and thousands of them extend all over the body. Some of the minor Upanishads, tantras, and Yoga speak of the seven centres where the mind dwells. These roughly correspond to the plexuses in the physical body, figuratively called lotuses or *chakras*, circles. They range from the sacral plexus in the coccyx, *muladhara*, to the *sahasrara*, the top of the brain. The mind also travels through the channels of *Ida*, *Pingala*, and *Sushumna* that connect all the levels. Swamiji in *Raja Yoga* states: 'As this Kundalini force travels from centre to centre, layer after layer of the mind, as it were, opens up.'¹⁵

The mind is called *manas* and is a function

of the internal instrument, *antahkarana*; other functions are: *buddhi*, *chitta*, and *ahamkara*, and like everything in Nature, is composed of *sattva*, controlled vibration, calmness; *rajas*, rapid vibration, passion; and *tamas*, low vibration, indolence, heaviness. Another fact regarding matter has to be remembered: it is dynamic. According to Swamiji, 'The Chitta manifests itself in the following forms—scattering, darkening, gathering, one-pointed, and concentrated. The scattering form is activity. Its tendency is to manifest in the form of pleasure or of pain. The darkening form is dullness which tends to injury. ... The gathering form is when it struggles to centre itself. The one-pointed form is when it tries to concentrate, and the concentrated form is what brings us to Samadhi' (2.203).

Swamiji uniquely explains the mind: 'Take a bar of steel and charge it with a force sufficient to cause it to vibrate, and what would happen? If this were done in a dark room, the first thing you would be aware of would be a sound, a humming sound. Increase the force, and the bar of steel would become luminous; increase it still more, and the steel would disappear altogether. It would become mind' (6.34).

The *Katha Upanishad* shows an example of terrific memory. Nachiketa, a mere boy, asked Yama, the god of death, for knowledge of a sacrifice by which one could gain heaven. Yama explained it minutely and then Nachiketa repeated it verbatim. Yama was so pleased, he said that the sacrifice would henceforth be named after him and in addition gifted a multicoloured jewelled necklace.¹⁶ Indian psychology minutely differentiates the various processes involved in memory: a) Past cognition, b) An impression of it, c) An awakening, *udbodha*, of that impression by excitants, *udbodhaka*, d) Recognition of the recalled object, e) Temporal and spatial localisation, and f) Identity of the self. Memory cannot be created,

destroyed, and altered at will. It reproduces the object as it was experienced in the mind. A perception of a jar gives rise to the memory of a jar, never of a cloth.

The Various Mental Processes

Perception: According to Advaita Vedanta when a sense organ comes in contact with an object, the *antahkarana* takes the form of the object. The form is called *vrutti*, wave. When for instance, the visual sense organ comes in contact with a pot, the *antahkarana* takes the form of a pot. If no *vrutti* coincides with the object, no perception can occur even if the eyes are open. The different modes of the *antahkarana* are its functions. When it becomes sure of the pot, it is in the mode of *buddhi*, intellect; but when it cannot determine whether it is a pot or something else, the mode is called *manas*; when the *antahkarana* remembers, it is *chitta*, mind-stuff. Lastly a relationship is established of 'I' and 'mine' with the *vrutti* and the final experience is, 'I know the pot' or 'this pot is mine' this mode is *ahamkara*, egoism. The material of the mind being very subtle and pure, it can expand, contract, and acquire unbelievable speeds.

Impression: After the pot has been cognised, the *vrutti* of the pot in the *antahkarana* subsides. It is like a wave rising in a lake and subsiding; only in the wave the water leaves no trace. But in the lake of the mind, the wave subsides and leaves its trace before going to take another form. This trace or impress is called a *samskara*. In fact, the final effect of every perception is *samskara*.

Retention: *Dharana*, to hold, to retain the impression, is the work of *chitta*. The impression's intensity depends on repeated cognition, intensity of cognition, attention, desires, and so on. The *antahkarana* is like a record book recording everything that comes in through the senses and from inside the body.

To Retain Impressions: Awareness is a powerful

tool for retaining impressions. The blind use memory to 'see' because they pay careful attention to things. The mind stores and processes information when we read slowly. Music has a tremendous hold on the mind; anything set to music is retained for a long time. It is also found that learning music as a child has the favourable effect of increasing semantic memory. Naturally, Vedic Aryans obviously were aware of it, for the Vedas are chanted to a rhythm and tune and among them the Sama Veda is pure music. Some minds work best with abstract ideas, some pictorially, others with semantics. To find out which is most suitable to oneself and cultivate it is a good practice. Sleep consolidates memory and should not be skipped as it is found to impair the ability to recall. To try and visualise while listening or reading helps impressions to become firm. Writing down deliberately and slowly what one wants to remember also helps. Above all, a liking for what one sees, reads, and hears is the surest way for the impressions to stay. The negative emotion of dislike also acts in retaining things negatively. Practice is one of the best ways or perhaps the only way to keep things in the mind.

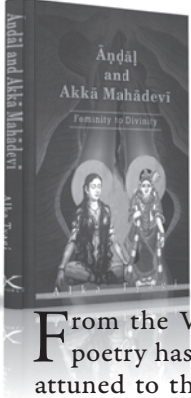
(To be continued)

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REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Andal and Akka Mahadevi: Feminity to Divinity Alka Tyagi

D K Printworld (P) Ltd, 'Vedasri',
F-395, Sudarshan Park, New Delhi 110
015. Website: www.dkprintworld.com.
2014. xvii + 278 pp. ₹ 585. HB. ISBN
9788124607169.

From the Vedic times onwards, devotional poetry has been the choice of many women attuned to the Divine. Even the Vedic canon has *rishikas*, female rishis, who have given us incandescent poems. The Bhakti Movement that flowered in South India from the third century onwards has given two celebrated hymnologists for posterity. Vaishnavism has been illumined by Andal and Shaivism by Akka Mahadevi—two contrastive characters seeking the same goal, an oneness with the Divine. One remained unmarried during her brief lifespan of probably sixteen years, always under the protective shade of her beloved father, Vishnuchitta, also a hymnologist; the other was married, separated, and remained on her own, dared society by discarding even garments using the diction of storming the citadel of God-consciousness.

For centuries they have been icons of bhakti. While there are several commentaries on Andal's poems, Akka Mahadevi's songs have also been studied with reverence and awe by Shaivites. The life histories of Andal and Akka are interesting but nobody thought of probing the strands that formed the lives. But the second half of the twentieth century has brought gender studies in vogue, after the advent of the feminist discourse. Andal and Akka Mahadevi have been placed in the churner by many myopic critics who have used the diction of feminism with a certain lack of sensitivity in marking their place in India's Bhakti Movement.

It is here that Alka Tyagi scores. She places the two devotional poets in their historical

setting and searches carefully for seeds of transformative power in their poems, as she has to manage with translations—of Andal from Tamil and of Akka Mahadevi from Kannada. She is not distant from semioticians who deal with signs as carriers of thoughts to unexpected and unexplored regions of human behaviour. While Andal and Akka Mahadevi used existing signs and symbols to convey their own thought processes, their devotees have sought to learn ways from them to transform their own lives. But there are not wanting the so-called foreign experts in Indic studies who have thrust unpalatable, Freudian ideas in evaluating the work belonging to the spiritual spaces of Indian culture. For instance, the late Dennis Hudson had, in his *Bhagavata Religion and Beyond*, peppered his account of Andal's sadhana with Freudian diction as if she were a sexist icon and the initiation ceremony of Vaishnavites was but signalled erotica. Akka Mahadevi's unconventional life, again, is easy target for such discourse on the Bhakti Movement.

In this scenario, Alka Tyagi proceeds as she should, not hurrying to conclusions easily. The strength of her critique is her faith in her chosen subject. Her interactions with eminent scholars throw much light on these two who broke gender-barriers by their meaningful hymns. For instance, critics like Hudson wax high on the symbolism of breasts as a symbol of sex. They forget the motherhood of woman. M A Lakshmithathachar deals with the symbolism when explaining the significance of Tiruppavai to Dr Tyagi: 'Here the word "breasts" is not merely a physical attribute but is a symbol of compassion, of the heart: a heart that swells with bhakti. Only a heart ever swelling with devotion can teach and understand Tiruppavai. Hence richness of heart is required for bhakti. Men can make themselves fit for bhakti only if they develop a feminine swell of intense devotion in their heart. That might be

the reason why all the saints before Andal, assumed themselves to be women with respect to their Lord God' (174).

Such is semiotics, the study of signs and it is self-defeating to see a sign as its original. Two centuries divide Andal and Akka Mahadevi. Akka's decision to be sky-clad as a Jangama, a Shaivite nun, is not one taken for newsworthiness! Dr Tyagi points out how Akka was able to distance herself from her husband, save herself from lustful men and also prove her independence to fellow-Virashaiva saints like Allama Prabhu. In outlining these triple planes of Akka's life, the author reveals how tantra yoga had a part to play in the spiritual ascension as evidenced in her *Yoganga Trividhi*.

The positive approach of the author makes Andal and Akka Mahadevi an important contribution to bhakti literature. Constructing the critical approach as an inclusive compendium, we get an idea of how the two hymnologists are closer to the modern psyche in music, dance, film, and painting. H S Shivaprakash's translation of select hymns from Andal and Akka Mahadevi helps us understand Dr Tyagi's statement on their outpourings: 'It often seems to be a different state of being, not accessible to a common mind, which was the source of these ecstatic compositions which are so powerful that they have become a part of the cultural consciousness of an entire race' (220).

To put it simply, that is all we know and surely that is all we need to know.

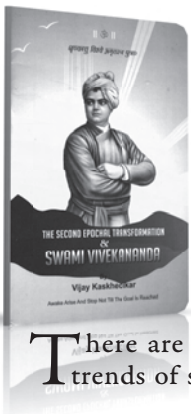
Prema Nandakumar

Researcher and Literary Critic
Srirangam

wave of Vedantic thought emphasises the sole reality of the Self, the microcosmic Reality—the truth pervading each and every being. All the existential problems originate from the non-apprehension of this fundamental verity and misapprehension of the body as the Self. This causes the cycle of births and deaths, and hampers spiritual evolution and has to be relentlessly combated and dispelled. This is a spiritual feat that can be accomplished only by deep and uninterrupted meditation on one's intrinsic and essential Self. This magnificent obsession with one's immutable Self as against the mutable psycho-physical complex is succinctly termed by Acharya Shankara in the thirty-first verse of his magnum opus *Vivekachudamani* as 'seeking after one's real nature'. Its accomplishment is only one half of the story of spiritual expedition. The second half of the spiritual odyssey consists in the intuitive perception of the esoteric equation between the Self and the absolute Reality which is the macrocosmic Reality. Its internalisation—which is laconically articulated in the major text as 'You are That'—engineers a paradigm shift in the soul's consciousness from the low sensory level to the sublime transcendental level. This cathartic awakening into the blaze of spiritual wisdom liquidates the progeny of nescience such as cramping ego and a constricting sensory outlook. The tremendous spiritual equation is elegantly hinted at by Shankara in the pregnant term 'seeking after one's real nature'. The principle of Atman is indeed its identity with Brahman.

The booklet under review forcefully demonstrates how Swami Vivekananda expounds these twin doctrines of Shankara—that constitute the quintessence of Vedantic lore—in popular idiom so that millions of aspirants may understand and put into practice the lofty message of Vedanta to attain salvation.

According to the author, the first phase of the epochal transformation is represented by Swamiji's tireless act of proclaiming loudly into the ears of the materialistic multitudes, the Upanishadic dictum of the divinity of the soul. Of course, Swamiji imprints this Vedantic message on the minds of the masses in his inimitable style



The Second Epochal Transformation and Swami Vivekananda

Vijay Kaskhedikar

Sri Ramakrishna Shivananda Matru Dham, 4-5, Pendhari, Sri Narayan Nagar, Wadadhamna, Taluk Hingna, Dist. Nagpur, Maharashtra 440 016. 2013. iv + 48 pp. ₹ 30. PB.

There are two distinct but closely-related trends of speculation in Vedanta. The first

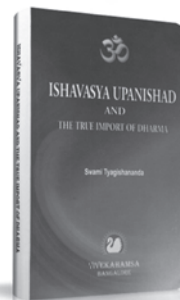
when he says, 'Each soul is potentially divine.' The first phase represents the ascendancy of materialism, rationalism, and scientific temper with the consequent relegation of spirituality to the limbo of oblivion. The high watermark of materialism and sensate culture was fully evident in the West while in India the bewildered society took 'reactionary efforts to readjust itself with its inherent religious beliefs and to counteract the onslaught of this new wave' (9). Desperately caught as they were in the crisis, they missed the core of spirituality, the divinity of the soul. The author's quotations from the book *Crisis of our Age* by the eminent sociologist Pitrim A Sorokin graphically portray the sad state of affairs prevalent then. Sorokin observes, 'In this way, the modern form of our culture emerged—the sensory, empirical, secular and this worldly culture. It may be called sensate'. He further says, 'Modern sensate culture emerged with a major belief that the true reality and true value were mainly or exclusively sensory'. The root of sensory life is body-love and spiritual ignorance. The panacea for this malady is spiritual enlightenment which the aphorism of Vivekananda Upanishad 'Each soul is potentially divine' prescribes. In the first phase, this spiritual dictum of Swamiji proved a potent answer to the scientific, rationalistic, and technological dynamism and excesses of the West while it aimed at curing the Indians of their lethargy and otherworldliness and infusing into them a modicum of dynamism.

In the second phase, Swamiji's vision of the world as the tabernacle of spirit and divinity leads him to discover and evolve the formula of service as the key to spiritual advancement and realisation. To Swamiji, it is only a short step from the truth of the divinity of each soul to the truth of the identity of Atman-Brahman. His spiritual perspicacity discovers that this truth of the basic oneness of Existence forms the *raison d'être* and bedrock of humanitarian and selfless service to all. This theory of unity of Existence that is the burden of song of Vedantic scriptures gets transmuted at Swamiji's hands into an amazing spiritual technology of loving service to all. This is, as far as I can understand the author, Swamiji's signal contribution

to spirituality in the second phase. Inspired by the utterance of truth '*Jiva is Shiva*' by his master Sri Ramakrishna, while he was in a high spiritual mood, Swamiji developed the pragmatic spiritual strategy of selfless service as an infallible means of spiritual progress. To Swamiji goes the entire credit of liberating Vedanta from the ivory tower of pedagogic theorisation and hair-splitting debates and making it suitable for diligent practice by the masses.

The book under review, though small in size, contains bushels of wisdom that triggers creative and fruitful reflections. It is an admirable analysis and exploration of exalting spiritual ideas that Swamiji, the modern spiritual messiah, articulated in the course of his all too brief terrestrial sojourn. This book is a must read for seekers interested in Swamiji's thoughts.

N Hariharan
Madurai.



***Ishavasya Upanishad and
The True Import of Dharma***
Swami Tyagishananda

Viveka Hamsa Prakashana, 569, 3rd Cross, Srinivasanagar, Bengaluru 560 050. Email: vivekahamsa@yahoo.com.
2013. xiv + 385 pp. ₹ 200. PB.

From time immemorial, the Upanishads are the perennial philosophy of Indian thought and culture, and the scholars world over have discussed the true import of dharma amongst the Upanishads. 'The topic of Brahman or God is the main subject matter of all the Upanishads, which give the essence of the Vedas as Brahman or Atman. The Upanishads also deal with the spiritual practices which are helpful to the realisation of God. ... The main details of this practice have to be gathered from the ritualistic portion of the Srutis (the Mantras and the Brahmanas). Of these Mantras and Brahmanas, Yajur Veda is the most important. It deals with, as its very name indicates, yajna or worship of God through self-sacrifice. It has come down to us in books or Shakhas (branches), Krishna-yajurveda and Shukla-yajurveda. In the former the mantras and their meanings and applications are all jumbled up together and hence the characterisation of it as Krishna

or black—perhaps because the rituals prescribed by it and the ideal placed by it before its votaries is of the attainment of worldly and sensual satisfaction. Such karma is called “Krishna-karma” or black karma as it leads only to further ignorance or darkness and continued entanglement in samsara as distinguished from Shukla-karma which leads to purity of mind and realization of God. Both these karmas are distinguished from one another by Patanjali in his Sūtras (IV.7) ... where, Patanjali also notes that the activity of a realized man is above both Shukla and Krishna’ (1–2).

In the *Shukla* Yajur Veda, the whole thing is neatly arranged by the great sage Yajñavalkya. ‘It deals with *nishkama karma* which leads to purity of mind and realization of God. This gospel is called Shukla for these two reasons’ (2).

‘The *Ishavasya* Upanishad belongs to this Shuklayajurveda and therefore we may consider Yajñavalkya as the rishi of this Upanishad to whom it was first revealed by God Himself’ (ibid.). But according to Madhva, ‘this Upanishad came from Svayambhuva Manu who praised the Lord Vishnu with these verses, when the latter appeared in his avatara as Yajna, the son of Akuti. The Rishi is thus Svayambhuva Manu and the subject matter of the Upanishad is the praise of God as Yajna’ (2–3). Anyhow, both the rishis Yajñavalkya and Dadhyanga taught *jivanmukti* as the goal of life and illustrated their teachings by their own example. ... Brihadaranyaka is also, one of the Upanishads belonging to the same Veda and it may be considered only as the elaboration of the teachings of *Isopanishad*’ (4).

Quoting from the different mantras of *Shukla* Yajur Veda (II.1–5), Swami Tyagishananda, has tried to bring the message that *Chittashuddhi*, purification of mind; bhakti, devotion; spiritual values; and rituals, are all necessary, not as discrete entities but as a synthesis of all yogas. This Upanishad is of supreme importance to the followers of Sri Ramakrishna, particularly while understanding the life of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In other words, the spirit of service along with its spiritual culture without any contradiction between the two is capable of being traced to the teachings of Yajñavalkya and the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, which form one of the basic

sources of the teachings of the Bhagavadgita also.

Swami Tyagishananda has referred to some modern interpretations given to peace chants from the mathematical standpoint. ‘The modern mathematician thinks that his conception of infinity is what is given in this mantra. To him the infinity cannot in anyway be affected by any addition, subtraction, multiplication or division. If an infinite number is taken away from the infinity or added to it, infinity remains unaffected. But the conception of the mathematician is not what Vedantins speak of as the Absolute Brahman. The Vedantin’s Brahman is beyond all conception itself. Even when he uses expressions like infinite or absolute he is fully conscious that these words denote only an idea, not the Absolute itself. But the infinity of mathematicians denotes a number and quantity although it may be infinitely large. It is something which could be manipulated within mathematical equations as it is designated by (as) ‘n’. It means only any number or quantity however big but still having characteristics of other number or qualities. Therefore it is only a relative conception which holds well only when the mind works in the waking state. It has no reference to the Reality which exists in itself beyond the three states of consciousness. Moreover the mathematicians deal with abstractions based on observations of sense data. Their conceptions of infinity is always coloured or limited by the sense data on which it is based’ (15).

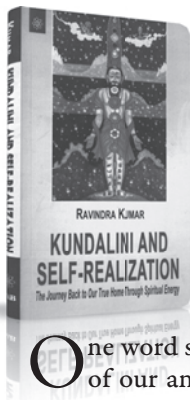
The swami has rightly pointed out the truth that the *Ishavasya* Upanishad ‘is the serious attempt to reconcile, harmonize, synthesize and integrate the various differing religious and philosophical ideas and views about spiritual life that was current in the Vedic days. This reminds us of a similar attempt made by Bhagavan Sri Krishna in Bhagavad Gita and of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in our own days’ (22). Among the modern interpretations of the text, the interpretation of Swami Vivekananda is quite significant. In his lecture ‘God in Everything’ (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols, 2.144), Swamiji has practically given us, ‘more or less a running commentary based upon Sankara with this difference that Swamiji takes the text as (applying to a Jivanmukta) dealing with Jivanmukti

and as equally helpful to all people. In this connection we may note the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi also about this Upanishad. According to him the first verse of this Upanishad is the quintessence of the whole Hinduism and if only this verse is left and all other scriptures are lost, Hinduism and Hindu spirit will still remain eternally alive' (24).

'The translation given in the appendix is based upon the original interpretation more or less coloured by modern views about the practical application of Vedanta to life' (ibid.). 'But the Upanishad has also a higher and more philosophical conception of God as Pure Consciousness or Atman of the devotee himself and of the whole universe' (25). Thus '*Isavasyamidam sarvam* is an injunction which lays on all the duty of knowing, loving and serving the whole world as God. It thus advocates a synthesis of Jnana, Bhakti, and Karma by the direction of intellect, emotion and will and body, mind and senses to God who is identified with the Paramatman' (30).

The learned author has given us some important notes on mantras and their English translation in Appendices I and II. The scholars on this Upanishad shall be greatly benefitted. The book is really a gem of wisdom.

Prof. Amalendu Chakraborty
Retired Professor of Philosophy,
Presidency College, Kolkata.



Kundalini and Self-Realization: The Journey Back to Our True Home through Spiritual Energy

Ravindra Kumar

New Age Books, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase-I, New Delhi 110 028.

Website: www.newagebooksindia.com.

2014. xxii + 231. ₹ 400. PB. ISBN

9788178224237.

One word sums up all the spiritual endeavour of our ancient teachers: self-discipline. Of the many disciplines of yoga, Kundalini has a high stature. It has been practised by aspirants from all over India. Interestingly enough, this yoga does not even ask the disciple to become a recluse. But it is a highly scientific and rarefied discipline that few can master; even if they do, there are very few

who can withstand the outburst of energy that follows the awakening of the Kundalini.

Ravindra Kumar has had the advantage of an Indian upbringing in spiritual matters and also wide exposure to the thought-currents of human energy like para-psychology in the West. Formerly a mathematician, he is widely read and is eager in taking notes. This book is a collection of the author's papers published at different times and is many a time just a superfluous amalgamation of ideas from the Eastern and Western traditions. There are a number of twentieth-century enthusiasts and practitioners of spiritual pathways like Paramahansa Yogananda, Madame Blavatsky, and Meher Baba criss-crossing the text. It appears that the author wants to justify his Kundalini experiences in the present religious, philosophical, and social context, mainly to those who are desperate to make quick progress in spiritual life with the short cut of 'Integral Path'.

Though probably aware that it may be misleading, the author gives detailed and mostly unconvincing accounts of his own Kundalini experience, which is a subjective process and loses its aura when verbalised. The author makes a joke of the process of self-discipline when he holds that engaging in sex could lead 'to the state of samadhi' (33). One is reminded of other hedonistic thinkers gnawing at the minds of the youth. Interestingly, the author has devised methods of keeping one's Kundalini in check as though it were an automobile! He writes: 'After the awakening of Kundalini, one has to take care that it neither slips back, nor overshoots the crown ... we have to use sedative methods to keep it under control. Cessation of yogic and meditational practices, intake of heavy food and limited intake of alcohol ... keeps the Kundalini under control' (125). This is Kundalini yoga according to the author!

This is one of those books where some authentic information is interspersed with diabolical thought making it difficult to differentiate one from the other. This is how a wonderful topic is marred due to the overzealous attempt of the author to put one's views in precedence to a long-established traditional thought. Such works are best kept away from one's hands, much less read.

PB

MANANA

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***The Rani Of Jhansi:
Gender, History, and Fable in India***
Harleen Singh

Cambridge University Press, 4381/4 Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 110002. 2014. xi + 189 pp. ₹ 795.
HB. ISBN 9781107042803.

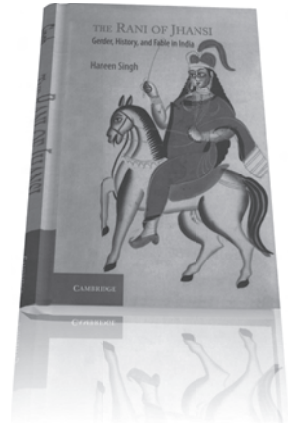
Rani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi, led her army against the British in 1857. The death of the king, Gangadhar Rao, had left the throne without a natural heir. The East India Company denied recognition to the adopted prince, or to the Queen as his regent and annexed the kingdom. Undeterred, Rani Lakshmi Bai took the reins of government, reorganised her forces and fought the colonialists. A figure of loss but not of defeat, the Rani lost her family, her kingdom and died in battle, but she also became a legendary figure in Indian history.

The 1857 rebellion is a watershed event in Indo-British colonial history that marked India's transformation from a mercantile colony to a dominion of the British crown and has since occupied an inordinately contested space in both British and Indian cultural mythology. Considered the 'First War of Independence' by nationalists and derided merely as a 'Mutiny' by colonial historiography, the rebellion has continued to provide a fraught terrain for the opposing transactions of British imperialism and Indian nationalism. On that discursive battlefield, the Rani herself, as the subject of numerous English romance novels, as a topic of debate in historical narratives, as the mobilising spirit in the rhetoric of Indian patriotism and as a celebrated figure in folk ballads and theatre, embodies an enduring enigma. Doubly articulated as history and

metaphor, the Rani is crucial to disciplinary discourses that produce the historical subject within the colonial and postcolonial conceptualisation of gender, political power and resistance.

The exigencies of ideology and genre impinge on the numerous stories about the Rani, yet each account represents her both in the certainties of history and in the mythical modalities of legend. For example, a sensational anecdote claims that the Rani jumped, while astride her horse, from the ramparts of the Jhansi fort, preferring death to surrender. In fact, most historical accounts affirm she was killed in a pivotal battle against forces commanded by Sir Hugh Rose and presumably cremated by her soldiers before the English could retrieve the body. While British narratives foster the victorious notion of her obliteration a sign of Britain's inevitable triumph, the absence of corporeal proof allows Indian accounts to construct her, and by extension the nation, as an undefeated figure.

The Rani's story was tempered for the Victorian reading masses through scores of popular romance novels and colonial historical accounts. In India, tales of the warrior queen remain emblematic of the anti-colonial struggle, which celebrates her as a harbinger of freedom. The details of her life remain ancillary to the dominant ideology of nineteenth century colonialism and twentieth century nationalism, which produce either a rebel without a justified cause or an ardent patriot. In both cases,




competing discourses produce an unproblematic, unified version of the Rani. Yet, a study of these appropriations provides insight into a complex colonial episteme of the self and other and into the often-complicit postcolonial figurations, which are not bereft of contradiction or conflation. Inevitably, however, the figure of the warrior queen, jarring in the traditionally masculine spheres of war and politics, profoundly affects the very processes of cultural and literary narrative that strive to modulate her significance. These textual figurations of the Rani, ostensibly used to bolster British and Indian political stance, question the very assumption of unifying national principles that naturalise colonial and later postcolonial rule.

I have undertaken to pursue representations of Rani Lakshmi Bai in an effort to flesh out the varying registers of colonial and postcolonial preoccupations with the female colonial rebel. This is comparative to the extent that the opposing discourses of colonialism and nationalism demonstrate how each facilitates its particular directives. The manifold, complex and unstable portraiture of the Rani are not merely varying perspectives, but are, in fact, distillations and active agents, often incidental though not therefore unimportant, of the policies and agendas that constitute political and cultural discourses.

Portrayals of the Rani reinforce not only her status as a mythic icon in Indo-British colonial and postcolonial discourse, but also the power wielded through the body of the native woman. Whereas a monstrous rendering of the Rani aided the British colonial project, Indian nationalist machinery diametrically overturned such representations to apotheosise her as a national symbol. My reading of these texts, produced from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, pays careful attention to the ways in which the rebel queen unhinges official narratives. Thus, I do not seek to fix the Rani in historical or literary discourse even

within the context of my interpretation. Instead, I explore the emergence of an uneven relationship of economic and political agendas, societal norms and gender stratifications within the allegedly neat demarcation between colonial and postcolonial representation to ask why the Rani's life lends itself to these particularly national stories. Why is she reduced in magnitude, to colonial and postcolonial concerns, when she ought to serve as the primary figure for her own story?

My study encompasses historical novels that purport to give accurate accounts, popular fictions that ride upon sensationalised memories of historical events and cinematic representations that configure history through the screen; thus providing a literary and feminist, but also methodological, contribution to the probing of gender, sexuality, race and religion. This book engages a theory of power, which remains attentive to gender as its main category of articulation and to the intersection of the 'public woman' with the 'public life' of history, as enunciated by the written text and the popular image. Though several historical, religious and cultural examples of women in power prevail, the militant woman of colonial and postcolonial description reveals the scarcity of scope in such representation. An identification with violent resistance necessitates a cultural re-imagining that can characterise such figures in more readily assimilated modes of femininity, lest they be constant reminders of the damage that can be wrought by a mere woman. Defiant of a singular theoretical articulation, the woman in the public sphere, elite monarch or nationalist military leader, disrupts the available epistemologies of representation and power is accessed here through a complex and contradictory matrix of sexuality, race, language and caste. If, as Spivak famously argued, feminist thought must return to 'measuring silences', then this book seeks a measure of the noise surrounding Rani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi. 

REPORTS

Headquarters

The birthday (tithi puja) of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated at Belur Math on Friday, 20 February 2015. Cooked prasad was served to about 25,000 devotees. Swami Jayananda presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon.

150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Swami Trigunatitanandaji Maharaj

Ramakrishna Math, Naora held a three-day programme from 21 to 23 January with a procession, cycle rally, special worship, and cultural events. On 23 January, Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the newly built multi-purpose hall and the archway and presided over the public meeting held in the afternoon, attended by about 8,000 devotees. **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Morabadi, Ranchi** conducted a Volunteers' Meet on 23 January, attended by 50 volunteers.

National Youth Day Celebrations

The following centres and the Headquarters (along with Saradapitha) celebrated National Youth Day with various programmes such as processions, speeches and cultural competitions: Agartala, Asansol, Aurangabad, Baghbazar, Bangalore, Bankura, Baranagar Mission, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chapra, Chengalpattu, Chennai Math, Coimbatore Math, Coimbatore Mission, Dehradun (Kishanpur), Delhi, Gadadhar Ashrama, Ghatshila, Hyderabad, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kadapa, Kalady, Kanchipuram, Kanpur, Limbdi, Malda, Manasadwip, Medinipur, Mumbai, Muzaffarpur, Nagpur, Patna, Ponnampet, Porbandar, Port Blair, Puri

Mission, Rahara, Raipur, Rajahmundry, Ranchi Morabadi, Ranchi Sanatorium, Salem, Sargachhi, Sarisha, Seva Pratishthan, Shillong, Sikra-Kulin-gram, Silchar, Swamiji's Ancestral House, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, Tiruvalla, Ulsoor, Vadodara, Vijayawada, and Visakhapatnam.

News of Branch Centres

On the occasion of Magh Mela, **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Allahabad** organized a medical camp, discourses, devotional singing, and an exhibition depicting the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji at Triveni Sangam from 5 January to 3 February. In all, 9,488 patients were treated at the medical camp and nearly 85,000 people visited the exhibition.

Srimat Swami Vagishanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the new computer centre at **Ramakrishna Math, Karimganj** on 2 February.

Ramakrishna Math, Lucknow conducted a regional youth convention from 30 January to 1 February. Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Swami Suhitananda, and several other distinguished speakers addressed the gathering. About 4,000 youths from eight states in North India participated in the convention.


Relief

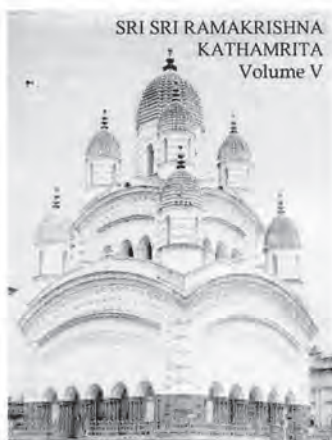
Winter Relief • The following centres distributed blankets to poor people: **India: Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata:** 150 from November to January; **Agartala:** 520 from November to January; **Allahabad:** 300 from 18 January to 2 February; **Almora:** 252 from 24 December to 31 January; **Antpur:** 350 from 23 November to 18 December and 425 from 1 to 22 February; **Asansol:** 887 from 19

November to 27 December; **Bankura**: 1,141 from 23 November to 27 January; **Bhubaneswar**: 78 from 29 December to 2 January and 103 on 6 and 13 February; **Chandipur**: 185 from 24 to 30 December; **Cherrapunji**: 390 in December and January; **Cooch Behar**: 250 from 13 to 31 December; **Delhi**: 474 from 26 December to 16 January; **Deoghar**: 700 from 1 December to 13 January; **Gol Park, Kolkata**: 50 from 10 to 14 January; **Guwahati**: 250 from 9 to 19 January; **Jamshedpur**: 181 from 15 December to 19 January; **Jayrambati**: 2,780 from 23 November to 17 January; **Kankurgachhi, Kolkata**: 265 on 13 and 14 January; **Kanpur**: 150 on 7 and 8 February; **Katihar**: 117 from 22 August to 24 December; **Khetri**: 52 on 25 January and 41 on 22 February; **Koalpara (Jayrambati)**: 750 from 10 to 23 November; **Limbdi**: 100 in February; **Malda**: 343 from 29 November to 26 December; **Medinipur**: 500 from 25 November to 24 December; **Muzaffarpur**: 250 on 29 and 31 December; **Naora**: 1,565 from 20 December to 10 January; **Narottam Nagar**: 500 in January; **Puri Math**: 700 from 11 December to 22 January; **Puri Mission**: 658 from 13 December to 11 January and 373 from 1 to 8 February; **Rahara, Kolkata**: 392 on 13 December and 4 January; **Ranchi Sanatorium**: 468 from 26 November to 18 January; **Saradapitha, Belur**: 300 from 7 to 24 December; **Sargachhi**: 519 from 10 November to 12 December; **Sarisha**: 750 from 13 December to 5 January; **Shillong**: 20 on 31 January; **Sikra Kulingram**: 120 on 22 January; **Tamluk**: 600 from 22 November to 17 December; **Vrindaban**: 640 from 14 December to 11 January; **Bangladesh**: **Baliati**: 100 on 26 December; **Dhaka**: 700 from 7 to 17 January; **Dinajpur**: 1,655 from 9 December to 5 February; **Total** 22,094. Besides, the following centres distributed various winter garments, mentioned against their names, to needy people: **Almora**: 28 sweaters from 24 December to 31 January. **Limbdi**: 54 sweaters in the month of February. **Malda**: 106 fleece jackets from 29 November to 26 December. **Porbandar**: 500 shawls and 400 sweaters on 21 and 22 February. **Puri Math**: 100 sweaters from 11 December to 22 January. **Swamiji's Ancestral House, Kolkata**: 57 sweaters in the month of December. **Vrindaban**: 250 shawls on 11 January and 1,500 shawls from 16 January to 15 February.

Fire Relief • India: Assam: On 24 February, Silchar centre distributed 100 kg rice, 15 kg dal, 16 packets of biscuits, 28 plates, 16 packets of candles, 14 dhotis, 28 chaddars, 20 saris, 17 sets of school uniform, 14 mosquito-nets, and 14 blankets among 14 families in Kanakpur area of Silchar, whose houses had been gutted in a fire. **Bangladesh**: On 6 February, Dinajpur centre distributed 100 saris and an equal number of dhotis, blankets, buckets, jugs, plates, bowls, and tumblers among 55 tribal families living in Habibpur area of Dinajpur district.

Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items, mentioned against their names, to needy people: **India: Antpur**: 425 packets (500 gm each) of nutritional drink powder, 425 packets (75 gm each) of biscuits, and 1275 bars of soap from 1 to 22 February. **Asansol**: 105 saris, 5 dhotis, and 27 half-pants on 29 November and 27 December. **Gol Park (Kolkata)**: 1,044 tins (400 gm each) of skimmed milk powder from 20 September to 20 November. **Koalpara (Jayrambati)**: 900 saris from 10 to 23 November. **Limbdi**: 164 saris in the month of February. **Narottam Nagar**: 120 saris, 294 tubes of toothpaste, 294 bars of bathing soap, 294 bars of washing soap, 1,470 sachets of shampoo, 184 towels, 124 bottles of hair oil, 110 notebooks, and an equal number of pens, pencils, erasers, and sharpeners from 12 to 19 February. **Porbandar**: 4,000 kg bajra (millet), 2,000 kg rice, 600 kg dal, 400 kg edible oil, 600 kg sugar, and 100 kg tea leaves on 21 and 22 February. **Puri Math**: 25 saris from 11 December to 22 January. **Puri Mission**: 250 notebooks and 125 pens on 1 February. **Rahara**: 600 tins (400 gm each) of skimmed milk powder from 15 September to 26 November. **Rajahmundry**: 240 tiffin carriers, 120 bed-sheets, 336 packets of nutritional drink powder on 9 and 20 February. **Sargachhi**: 153 saris from 10 November to 12 December. **Sarisha**: 144 packets of biscuits on 5 January and 1,140 tins (400 gm each) of skimmed milk powder from 19 September to 8 January. **Tamluk**: 410 saris and 200 chaddars from 22 November to 17 December.

Economic Rehabilitation • The following centres gave sewing machines to the poor and needy: **Antpur**: 14 machines from 1 to 22 February. **Porbandar**: 16 machines on 14 February. 



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Inspired by the sayings of Swami Vivekananda "This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive", many eminent doctors, surgeons, medical specialists in different areas and paramedics, have voluntarily come forward to serve the poor. The foundation stone for this building has already been laid by our Most Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission on the 14th December, 2014.

Owing to paucity of funds, we earnestly appeal to devotees, admirers and organizations to kindly come forward and contribute generously so that the poor and needy may receive proper medical services.

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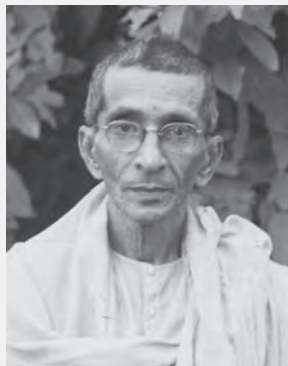
Adhyaksha

Is Religion indifferent to the sufferings of humanity ?

Swami Vireswarananda

(Tenth President, Ramakrishna Math & Mission)

All over the world people say that religion is indifferent to the sufferings of humanity. Religion is not the dope given to the poor and suffering to keep them quiet so that they may hope for a better world after death, and remain satisfied. But those who object to religion say that we want something here and now, and not after death. Swami



Vivekananda also told the same thing, “I cannot believe in a God to give me heaven after death, who cannot give me a piece of bread in this world!” And he also said that the religion which does not wipe the tears of the widow or the cries of the orphan cannot be said to be a religion. So Swamiji stressed service and feeling for the suffering people and serving them with a particular attitude which did not clash with our spiritual life.

When Swamiji met his gurubhais before going to the West somewhere in western India, he told them, “I do not know anything about religion, but I find that my heart has become very big. I intensely feel for people who are suffering.” One day he was talking with his disciple Sarat Chakravarty and they were discussing philosophical questions. Girish Babu was there, and after some time Girish Babu began in his dramatic way to give descriptions of the suffering in the world. He drew various pictures of the world and the way people suffer in the world. Swamiji could not keep himself composed and so he got up and left the hall. And Girish Babu told Sarat, “See, I don’t esteem Swamiji for his philosophical expositions, but I adore him for his love for the suffering people.”

Another incident which is very thrilling—Swami Vijnananandaji told us about this. When he was at Belur Math, in the evening after arati and meditation, we used to go and sit near him and just hear him talk. In the course of the talk, one day he told us about an episode in the life of Swamiji. In the Math on the first floor there is a veranda facing the east and overlooking the Ganges, and there are three rooms with three doors leading to this veranda. In Swamiji’s room the door is in the northern side facing the north. In the other two rooms the doors face the east, and one of them is a small room in which Swami Vijnananandaji used to stay. One night—it was about 1 o’clock—Swamiji came out of his room, and was walking up and down the veranda. Swami Vijnananandaji saw it and he came out and asked Swamiji, “Well, Swamiji, are you not getting sleep?” Then Swamiji replied, “Well, Peshun, I was fast asleep, but I got a sudden shock which roused me from the sleep. And after that I am feeling uneasy and so I have come out on the veranda just for a cool breeze from the Ganges.” He stopped for some time and continued, “I think there must have taken place some catastrophe somewhere in the world, and there must have been human suffering which roused me from my sleep and gave me the shock.” Hearing the statement of Swamiji that somewhere something had happened and he was roused from his sleep by human suffering, Vijnananandaji told us, “I simply laughed in my sleeves at Swamiji’s statement. But to my great surprise, when I opened the newspapers the morning after the next, I read the headlines about the great disaster due to earthquake somewhere in the South East near Fiji which left hundreds dead and thousands homeless.” The time of the event given in the paper was midnight, just the time when Swamiji got the shock. His nervous system had become so fine that it responded to human suffering even at that distance, just as a seismograph responds to the tremors of the earthquake. So, to say that people who are religious are indifferent to human suffering or that religion is anti-social, is not a correct statement. Thakur’s message and Swamiji’s interpretation of that message to this great Organization, show that religion and religious persons can never be indifferent to human suffering.

(*Spiritual Ideal for the Present Age* Swami Vireswarananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras—600004, First edition., 1983, pages 87-89.)

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